

A COLLECTION OF DREAMS:  
THE LEGACY OF VIRGINIA HASELTINE



by  
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A COLLECTION OF DREAMS:  
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## ABSTRACT

Title: A COLLECTION OF DREAMS:  
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This historical narrative focuses on art patron, Virginia Haseltine, and her contributions as an art collector in Portland, Oregon, during the 1960s. An examination of her influence on the art world of the west coast and her involvement in the development of the concept and phenomenon known as Pacific Northwest Art provide a focus of the study. Subtopics of this narrative include the concept and evolution of Pacific Northwest art and artists and Portland, Oregon, as an art center during the 1960s. The impact of the donation of her collection to the University of Oregon's Museum of Art is also examined. Through the use of historical research and interviews with Haseltine's friends and contemporaries this study provides a look at an influential person's contribution to the regional art world of the Pacific Northwest.

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“Art is necessary, if people are to survive creatively in this  
soul-sucking age.”  
—Virginia Haseltine

“The artist is only half the canvas; the viewer must respond.”  
—Morris Graves

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And to Virginia....wherever your spirit may be.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### Purpose of the Study

My purpose is to document Virginia Haseltine's influential and evolving role in the art world of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest during the 1960s. I accomplish this by interviewing selected colleagues, friends, and acquaintances of Virginia. I also critically analyze documents and publications relevant to Virginia's art patronage. I explore Virginia's motivations, background, and advisors. I analyze the impact her collection had upon both the art world and the University of Oregon Museum of Art (UOMA).

A part of my purpose is to look generally at the past, to examine the "art scene" of the 1960s in the Pacific Northwest, and to consider Virginia's continuing regional influence today. An examination of west coast galleries and museums of the 1960s and the influences they had upon the promotion and acceptance of Pacific Northwest art and artists reveals the evolution of this regional art as a recognized and respected art phenomena. I also study the influence of museums, galleries, and patrons, and how together they changed the reputation of, and gained worldwide respect for, the artistic expression that became known as Pacific Northwest Art. I touch upon stereotypical roles of women during this time with emphasis on the unique position of Virginia and her boundary-breaking influence in the regional art world of the time.

It is my conclusion that as a prominent Oregonian, Virginia, by indulging her interests in regional art, influenced and changed the field forever. How she developed into a respected collector of Pacific Northwest art provides the main theme of the study. I hope that an understanding of how the 1960s—an era of change across the country—was reflected in the art world of the Pacific Northwest.

### Background of the Study

Virginia had the first showing from her collection at the University of Oregon Museum of Art in 1963. The exhibit was titled, *Pacific Northwest Art: The Haseltine Collection*. According to Lawrence Fong, Associate Director of the UOMA, (personal communication, October 2001) it was one of the first, if not the first, collection labeled, “Pacific Northwest Art.” His opinion is corroborated by an on-line UO news release of June, 2000:

The Haseltine Collection was displayed first at a 1963 UO Museum of Art exhibition, “Pacific Northwest Art: The Haseltine Collection.” In discussions following that exhibition, the museum’s then-current director Wallace Baldinger and Haseltine determined that no other museum in the region was acquiring a collection of art by artists living in the greater Pacific Northwest.

During the 1960s Portland and Seattle began to emerge as art centers as more patrons and collectors came to appreciate the distinct style of Pacific Northwest artists and the influences of Asia and the Far East (described then as “the Orient”) portrayed in their work. As Geldzahler (1965) observed:

Thematically, the Northwest artists have been chiefly interested in the relationship between man and nature. It is the relative closeness of the Pacific

Northwest –Washington and Oregon—to the Orient with the flow of influence and attraction from that region, that has made the art of this region so unlike that of the Europe-influenced art of the east coast (p. 161).

Philosophical and spiritual themes were revealed in the art that was being produced and the melding of Western and Eastern thought became a distinct characteristic of the artists of this region.

Virginia's interests in regional art began several years earlier with the work of four Pacific Northwest painters: Mark Tobey (1890-1976), Kenneth Callahan (1905-1986), Guy Anderson (1906-1998), and Morris Graves (1910-2001). She found a common bond between their portrayal of the integration of nature and spirituality and her own interest in Jungian philosophy and mysticism. As these artists became more and more in demand and recognized by regional and worldwide collectors, Virginia was often outbid on their artwork. Lacking the amount of discretionary funds of some of her contemporaries, her interests and collections began to include other forms of art, particularly ceramics, which were much more affordable and accessible at the time. Virginia responded to the design elements and subject matter and included many ceramic pieces in her collection. Ceramics, because of its traditional functionality, had been largely viewed as a craft or folk art rather than a collectable fine art. During the 1960s many ceramic artists were moving away from functional and utilitarian pieces toward more sculptural and design-oriented works. The Seattle World's Fair in 1962, as part of its "Northwest Art Today" exhibit also included "Adventures in Art," an exhibit devoted to what would have been previously

described as crafts that included many examples of this new form of ceramic art. In the exhibition book Gervais Reed (1962), Assistant Director of the Henry Gallery at the University of Washington states,

The creative minds of our time are breaking down the old fences and opening new paths for us to follow. One of the oldest and strongest of these fences has been the one dividing the “fine arts” (painting and sculpture) from the “minor arts” (everything else). Today this division is becoming blurred. The “fine” artists are producing works which straddle the line, while on the other side the “minor” artists are moving out in great numbers, producing things in traditional craft media which can not be evaluated, or even described in traditional craft language, things which are not “Good Design,” which transcend the function and go beyond decoration (p.79).

Virginia’s inclusion of ceramics in her collection helped to raise its acceptability as a true and collectible art medium. Virginia’s varied collection influenced others to look to diverse art forms as representative of Pacific Northwest regional art and helped to define Pacific Northwest art characteristics:

From the Oriental and Asiatic influences came a renewal of interest in the perfection of techniques, a reflection of religion and philosophy along with a responsiveness to nature. Our artists were also conditioned by indigenous cultures of the American Indian and by a peculiar quality of light which stirs the spirit and spurs the creative mind. Unique colors and forms emerge...the colors of decaying forests which are born, grow, and die in the rains, together with numinous fusion of sky and sea, all blending with mythic commentary on

the spiritual truths as they affect our twentieth century living in the last vast and uncluttered area of our nation. (*A Gift of Love*, 1975, p. 4)

Her generous donation of her collection to the UOMA secured its place as a regional art center for the Pacific Northwest.

The 1960s have been regarded as a decade of change. Attitudes toward government, the role of women, fashion, reproductive rights, the Vietnam War and the questioning of authority and government, were undergoing scrutiny and transformation. Art was evolving as well and “Pacific Northwest Art” was becoming a common term in art circles. Portland and Seattle emerged as the centers of this regional phenomenon. Particular individuals contributed to this regional excitement about art and influenced the art being produced and collected. Many credit Virginia as the definer of Pacific Northwest Art. Referring to her strong impact on regional art, a 1963 letter from museum director, Wallace Baldinger, to Virginia states,

I do not know of any other continued activity in acquiring Pacific Northwest painting and sculpture for a collection. Our regional culture richly deserves the patronage and consequent encouragement and public attention which your development of the Haseltine Collection of Pacific Northwest Art is making possible (UOMA Archives).

She succeeded in promoting Pacific Northwest artists by personally collecting their work and encouraging her friends to do likewise.

### Significance of Study

A significant amount has been written about the *Haseltine Collection* but very little about the woman behind it. By exploring the life of Virginia as an art collector and patron of the 1960s, my research examines how one woman, by accepting only regional artists into her collection, changed the way Pacific Northwest art forms were, and are, viewed and acknowledged. Virginia's efforts to promote regional art, and her patronage to the UOMA, were evidenced by her being the first person awarded a Pioneer Award by the University of Oregon in 1979, and by the presentation of the Governor's Award for the Arts in 1985. She was also a founder of the Friends of the Museum at the University of Oregon and was an original member of Statewide Services, an organization that circulated art exhibitions to outlying and rural areas of Oregon and the Northwest. She was appointed by Governor Mark O. Hatfield to serve on the Governor's Planning Council for the Arts and Humanities in 1966. The Oregon Arts Commission evolved from this council.

### Guiding Questions

The following questions have served as a guide in the development and implementation of this historical research project:

- What is the significance of the Haseltine Collection of Pacific Northwest Art?
- Who was Virginia Haseltine and what was her influence on regional art?
- What was the art scene of the 1960s like in Oregon?
- What/who influenced Virginia Haseltine's decisions on collecting?
- What were the common elements in what was termed "Pacific Northwest Art"?
- Who were some of the notable Pacific Northwest artists?

### Design of Study

This is a descriptive study of Virginia's life and times. My descriptions come through the techniques of historical research. I use art essays and critiques as an aid in understanding the changing attitudes of what constituted collectable "art" during this decade. I will document the extent to which Virginia's promotion of regional art helped shape the art world of the Pacific Northwest, with the primary focus on Oregon.

I conducted structured, but open-ended, interviews with various acquaintances, friends, and contemporaries of Virginia's. These interviews were compiled, transcribed, and included in the study as both background information and anecdotal material. I used techniques from qualitative and oral history research to gather memories, opinions, and anecdotes about Virginia, her collection, and her art patronage.

### Data Collection Methods

I used articles and internet websites dealing with effective techniques for productive and informative oral history interviews to prepare for meeting with the subjects (Southern Oral History Program website, Oral History Review, 1997, Oral History Project Handbook website). I accessed the oral history recordings housed at the Oregon Historical Society in Portland, Oregon, for the transcriptions of interviews with Mark Tobey, Kenneth Callahan, Henk Pander, and other relevant personalities. I also conducted in-depth document analysis of correspondence and writings located in the UOMA Special Collections and at the UOMA archives. Preliminary contact with Lawrence Fong, associate director of the UOMA, Hope Pressman, friend and

contemporary of Virginia and Sally Haseltine, Virginia's step-daughter, provided preliminary leads on contacts and information used in my research.

I made several trips to Portland to access regional information sources, publications, documents, and artifacts. I met with interviewees at their homes, at their places of work, and over the telephone in Portland, Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, and the state of Virginia. I attended a lecture at the University of Oregon that had relevance to my study (Theodore Wolf, art critic, *Morris Graves: Longing and Reconciliation*, UO Lecture Series, April 11, 2002).

People interviewed were:

- Jarold Kieffer, UO administrator from 1963 – 1967
- Hope Pressman, friend and contemporary of Virginia
- Lawrence Fong, associate director of the UOMA
- Henk Pander, Portland artist and friend of Virginia

All data collection methods were carried out in compliance with the rules and regulations outlined by the University of Oregon Office of Human Subjects Compliance.

### Limitations and Concerns

The accessible information regarding Virginia is limited. Much more has been written about the artists represented in her collection. In exploring the art scene specific to the Pacific Northwest during the 1960s, little documentation is available. Information regarding certain artists and art pieces was readily available, but information on the era of the 1960s, in regard to available and accessible art and the art scene in the Pacific Northwest, is rather scarce.



Relying on information from friends and contemporaries posed a potential bias as reflections gathered posthumously are often filtered with sentimentality and the desire to impart only positive memories. Interviews containing memories and retrospection could not be validated or authenticated. I limited the interviews to four people. Family members declined to participate in this study, so that perspective is absent from my research.

Rather than attempt to document an entire lifetime of art patronage, I used the decade of the 1960s as a focus for my study. I limited my discussion on Pacific Northwest artists primarily to the four most influential in Virginia's life. Their work had a profound impact on her developing interest in Northwest art.

#### Definition of Terms

- Pacific Northwest – the upper corner of the United States and Southwest Canada that borders the Pacific Ocean. This area includes parts of Oregon, Washington and British Columbia
- Regional Art – art produced by artists living in a particular area.
- The Mystics – a term first defined in Life Magazine in 1953 and used to describe the work of four Northwest painters: Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Kenneth Callahan, and Guy Anderson
- Collection – an assemblage of art pieces and artifacts collected by an individual and usually donated to a museum

## CHAPTER II

### PACIFIC NORTHWEST ART AND ARTISTS

In this chapter I examine the influence of several renowned artists of the 1960s. I discuss their regional representation and their reputation throughout the country. I look at how they influenced the collecting of art by Virginia Haseltine. I explore the decade looking at trends and changes that happened around the country. I discuss Portland, Oregon, and the University of Oregon Museum of Art with an historical look at the art scene in these two locales during the decade. This chapter provides a background and context to my study of Virginia.

#### The Four Mystics

In its September 28, 1953, issue *Life Magazine* ran an article titled, “Mystic Painters of the Northwest.” It was the first national acknowledgement that the art “coming out of the northwest corner of the U.S.” (p. 84) was different and that it had characteristics unlike the art being produced on the east coast or anywhere else in the United States. It succinctly characterized this element as embodying, “a mystical feeling toward life and the universe” (p.84). This article told the rest of the nation of the Asian-influenced art coming out of the northwest and featured four regional painters: Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Kenneth Callahan, and Guy Anderson. These four would afterwards be referred to as *The Mystics*.

#### *Mark Tobey (1890 – 1976)*

The patriarch of the four, Mark Tobey came to the west coast for the first time in 1922. He settled in Seattle then struck out on a voyage across the ocean that eventually led him to Japan and China. In 1918, Mark Tobey had become a member

of the Bahai'i faith, which believes in the oneness of all peoples and in the unity of all religions. During his 1934 visit to Asia he spent "more than a month living in a Zen monastery outside Kyoto, Japan, painting and meditating" (Ament, 2001, p. 15). He studied Asian calligraphy during this time and is noted for his "white writing" style of painting that evolved from this study. Tobey often acknowledged the influence of his faith to his art. Tobey became the first American since James Abbot Whistler (1834 – 1903) to win the Painting Prize at the Venice Biennale in 1959. In 1961 he had a retrospective of his work at the Louvre in Paris, which was considered an extraordinary tribute to a living artist. He, like the other three "Mystics," was largely self-taught in art.

*Guy Anderson (1906 – 1998)*

The only one of the four Mystics who did not travel to Asia to find his inspiration in Eastern philosophies and mysticism, Anderson did explore the upper regions of Alaska and Canada. There he found a rugged beauty in the landscape and discovered the art and culture of the indigenous native peoples who inhabited the places of his travels. Like his northwest cohorts, Anderson's work reflects the interrelationship of man, nature, and spirituality. Mandalas, spirals, and other archetypal images frequent his work. His life-long history with the region is reflected in his work's earthy tones and subject matters.

*Kenneth Callahan (1905 – 1986)*

Taking the most circuitous route to art of The Mystics, Kenneth Callahan was first a seaman and then a forest ranger before deciding to become a painter. Born in Spokane, Washington, he lived his entire life in the Pacific Northwest and studied at

the University of Washington in Seattle. For twenty years, from 1933 to 1953, he was first the curator and then the assistant director of the Seattle Art Museum. He wrote articles about art for newspapers and periodicals and was visiting professor and artist-in-residence at several universities. His art often reflected the relationship between man and nature, and he frequently painted mountains or landscapes with lighting that was unmistakably Pacific Northwest influenced.

*Morris Graves (1910 – 2001)*

Recognized early as a notable painter, fame came early to Morris Graves who had his first one-man exhibition at the Seattle Art Museum in 1936 at the age of 26. He gained national recognition in 1942 for the inclusion of his paintings in the New York Museum of Modern Art's "Americas 1942" exhibit. Born in Fox Valley, Oregon, in 1910, Graves lived in various towns in the Pacific Northwest while growing up and traveled throughout the world as an adult. In 1928 he became a seaman on the American Mail Line to the Far East which sparked his lifelong interest in Asian art and culture. Graves was a student of Zen Buddhism and approached his art, as stated in his obituary in the Los Angeles Times (May 9, 2001), with "reverence for nature and a keen interest in Eastern religion." In 1938 Graves met Mark Tobey and discovered another artist whose works were an homage to Eastern philosophy. The UOMA has the largest single holding of his work. The Graves-at-Oregon Project was directed by Virginia Haseltine and it is through her efforts that this collection came to the UOMA. Morris Graves had a profound effect on Virginia both spiritually and as a patron of the arts.

## Regional Art and Artists

The Mystics had common components in their work that separated them from other artists of the period. According to Lawrence Fong, of the UOMA, this designation came to them during a time when their art was particularly introspective:

They were painting with water-based medium, and in small scale, they were not working like de Kooning and Jackson Pollack and other artists of the '50s with huge, huge, canvases and explorations of color, of abstract forms, of spontaneity, so the *mysticism* comes from: 1) the subject matter; 2) the materials they used; and 3) from their introspection. (L. Fong, personal communication, April 2002).

Though grouped for their similar renderings, the four artists did not necessarily have an affinity for one another. Each had embraced and explored Eastern philosophy and religion—which was reflected in their works—but the real commonality was their tie to, and existence in, the Pacific Northwest. Early in their careers they traveled in the same circles, lived in the same region, had mutual interests, and shared the common bond of being struggling artists who were gathering recognition. Eventually they went their own ways and in some instances purposely avoided each other's company. Callahan attributes the split to an article he wrote in *Art News* magazine in 1946 regarding Northwest artists. He was asked by the publisher to purposely downplay Tobey and Graves because of their already celebrated notoriety and was directed to emphasize the lesser known regional artists. Toby and Graves were incensed at their exclusion and wrote letters of protest to the

magazine. From that point on, according to Callahan, the bond was broken.

(Northwest Oral History Project, No. 3, 1982, Oregon Historical Society)

Even after *Life Magazine* had shown the spotlight on the “Mystic Painters of the Northwest,” the majority of artists living and working there were still primarily showing their work on the east coast. Museums and galleries on the west coast, meanwhile, were still focusing on purchasing and collecting art by east coast and European artists. The Mystics had been recognized, but the greatest impact was the demand for their work in galleries in New York and Chicago. Other northwest regional artists such as Carl Morris, C.S. Price, Louis Bunce, and Paul Horiuchi struggled to survive as artists as their reputations slowly grew. At this time, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, very few artists, particularly those residing on the west coast, were able to find success as an artist unless they had high profile agents who promoted their work in east coast galleries. The idea of promoting and collecting with a focus on northwest artists had not yet arrived. Virginia wrote in the catalogue of *Pacific Northwest Art: The Haseltine Collection*:

In milestones of memory I see myself trudging European galleries in the thirties, harvesting the usual mishmash impressions and a collection of fine reproductions of Old Masters. ... With certain sophistication I mated two reproductions –a Living American Art reprint ...with an old Viennese Anton Chroll. They were both skating scenes, had related colors, and happened to be the same size; they hung happily side by side, in matching frames for too long a time, while across the city, Mr. C.S. Price, of Portland, was dying in

poverty, many of his canvases lost in cellars, while younger artists were self-consciously trying also to “fuse with nature.”

...Generally, in the forties, and fifties, most Americans facing East were buying third rate European, while on the West coast, excellent Oriental was still to be had. West Coast American artists were not fashionable. The Works Progress Administration kept Northwest artists alive before the war, giving them highly creative experience which paid little following the war (Haseltine, 1963, The Oregon Collector At Home section, ¶ 6.)

The decade of the 1960s saw a change in attitude regarding regional artists of the Pacific Northwest, and several key people were the force behind this transition.

#### Portland and Pacific Northwest Art Scene of the 1960s

Growing up in Portland, Oregon, I remember the 1960s as a volatile, evolving era in the history of the United States. The Vietnam War raged and divided the country politically in ways rarely experienced in this country. Youth questioned government practices and most other realms of society. Fashion, art, music, and even length of hair were controversial subjects. The Beatles, Andy Warhol, Woodstock, and Timothy Leary became familiar entities to us. Words such as *psychedelic*, *transcendental meditation*, *napalm*, *marijuana*, *Watergate* were common, and phrases such as “make love not war”, “question authority,” and “my country –love it or leave it,” peppered everyday conversation. We spoke of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

The early years of the 1960s were very different from the late 1960s. It was an age of innocence that grew into rebellious adolescence. We looked upon the

government as “the establishment” and, as college-age students, held sit-ins and demonstrations protesting the escalation of the Vietnam War and other controversial issues. Concern for the environment, a movement to “get back to the land,” and a rejection of materialism was particularly evident along the west coast. It is not hard for me to understand why the art produced by The Mystics (though sometimes painted in previous decades) was embraced and understood by our generation as we looked for examples of expression that reflected humankind’s interrelationship with nature. The art being produced on the east coast was generally vast and full of movement and emotion while the west coast art reflected, in much smaller formats, an attempt to find serenity, to express reverence of nature and spirit, and the universality of the human psyche.

Self-awareness institutes such as Esalan in Big Sur, California, were forming and people flocked to these retreats and workshops to try to find meaning in their lives in truly tumultuous times. “A convergence of mountains, and sea, mind and body, East and West, meditation and action –Esalan” is the institute’s description on its website (<http://www.esalan.org>). In the 1960s it attracted to its staff Abraham Maslow, co-founder of both humanistic and transpersonal psychology, and Fritz Perls, co-founder of Gestalt therapy. Carl Jung’s theories, especially those involving archetypal symbols and “collective unconscious,” were receiving renewed attention. These institutes attracted not only the young but often people our parent’s age as well. It was this segment of the population that had the time to spend at the retreat and who could also afford the large fees charged.



The art scene in the Pacific Northwest was evolving as well. With the Great Depression ending only twenty years before, people were hard put to spend their money on artwork. Artists, struggling to exist solely as artists, often sold their work at rock-bottom prices. In Oregon very few galleries existed and the museums of the area still focused on collecting art from the east coast and Europe. “There were no commercial art galleries in Portland in 1960; the various cooperative galleries of the fifties, such as Louis Bunce’s Kharouba Gallery, had all ceased operations, which created a void for the ever-growing community of artists” (Schnitzer, 1986, p.9). In the early 1960s, The Portland Art Museum was the center for visual arts for the state and the only art galleries were located in Portland as well. There had been attempts made to open galleries in Eugene, but they quickly closed from lack of sales. The only major museum outside of Portland and Seattle was at the University of Oregon, but it was not open to the general public. Portland, as the largest urban center in the state, was still, in comparison to east coast cities, far behind in terms of recognizing and promoting artists. Arriving from Amsterdam in the mid-1960s, artist Henk Pander found Portland to be provincial,

...especially when I came here in the 60s. It was a small community but still had a lot of ambition. I was ambitious myself; I could grow with it. It was extremely small and clique-ish, [and] still is to an extent. I came out of post-war Amsterdam. Portland seemed small, isolated, a provincial capital of artists who had an entirely different background than I. I had no affinity for a lot of the work being produced here –I had no connection with it. A lot of people were trying to emulate the thoughts coming out of New York. [There was] a

drive here to be progressive. Nobody out here knew me. And this [Vietnam] war –demonstrations, hostility, there was great upheaval. So, I painted it in my work. I don't have very fond memories of my relationship with the art community at the time (H. Pander, personal communication, March 15, 2002).

By the mid-1960s the Portland art scene was emerging. Galleries were flourishing and the Portland Art Museum became the state's main promoter of the visual arts. By the mid-60s, the renewed interest in arts was apparent. Virginia writes in 1963,

Art classes are booming, often attended by housewives with husbands; exhibitions are crowded; private galleries are busy not only in Portland but throughout the state. Portland newspapers often list as many as thirty-five current exhibitions which include two full fledged commercial galleries, five smaller galleries-on-the-side. College galleries are continuously exhibiting and interpreting excellent art at Reed, Portland State, University of Portland, and Marylhurst...one can see changing shows at the Beaverton and Lake Oswego Public Libraries to say nothing of many restaurants, newspapers, banks, and business houses, which hang original works....Five years ago when I traveled about the state for the Friends of the Museum there were no art centers. Today [1963] there are galleries at Bend, Ashland, Eugene, Corvallis, Medford, Salem, Klamath Falls...The state is abloom with art interest. (Collection Catalogue, The Oregon Collector At Home section, ¶ 11.)

Long time friend and contemporary of Virginia's, Hope Pressman, says of the 1960s,

It was an exciting time. It [was] easier and more exciting to develop a project and get it under way. The challenge is really exhilarating and that's what was happening during that time. I met some wonderful, wonderful, people, and grew in my own appreciation for the arts. Springing from that early Friends of the Museum organization was the Arts in Oregon Association centered in the University of Oregon Museum, which in turn evolved into the Governor's Planning Council for the Arts and Humanities, and from that evolved into the Oregon Arts Commission. All of that took place during that period. It was extremely exciting. (H. Pressman, personal communication, March 2002)

As a new administrator at the University of Oregon, Jarold (Jerry) Kieffer came to Oregon in 1963 after having been the executive director of the congressionally authorized project to create a national center for the performing arts in Washington, D.C. After the assassination of President Kennedy this facility became known as the Kennedy Center. One of his duties as executive officer to UO president Arthur Flemming was to become the UO's governor on the Board of Governors of the Friends of the Museum of Art and to maintain administrative oversight of the museum. In addition to his duties to the UOMA, Kieffer helped to draft bylaws for the Eugene Symphony and joined the board of directors of the Lane County Auditorium Association –which led to the development of the Hult Center for

the Performing Arts. Involved with the arts on both the east and west coasts, Kieffer described the differences,

I came from long experience in Washington and New York where the arts picture was encrusted with organizations founded generations earlier by the old families. People new to the scene had a hard time being heard or accepted. Some of this same thing characterized Portland and Seattle in the mid-sixties, but not to the degree found in New York and Washington. Things were even more open then. New ideas were given a hearing, and new people who offered constructive energy were welcome to help out. Eugene was even more open to new ideas and people. Also, there were more gaps to be filled in the arts scene. I had a chance to bring community arts needs to the attention of the community's business leaders.

I found that a number of the fine arts faculty members at the University of Oregon were highly regarded in both Portland and Seattle. I judged, however, that they were regarded as more "experimental" to some and radical to others. Oregon has always been an interesting mixture of liberal experimentation and hard-line conservatism—in government, politics, and the arts. (J. Kieffer, personal communication, March 17, 2002)

In his administrative role in overseeing the UOMA, Kieffer worked closely with museum director, Wallace Baldinger. Baldinger had been collecting art both privately and for the university's museum. He traveled extensively and would purchase pieces during his travels. For many years the museum was open only to

professors and students of Asian art, according to the gift agreement made with Gertrude Bass Warner who had demanded this dictum in exchange for her enormous collection of what was then called “Oriental” art. Her collection consisted of more than 3,200 pieces of Asian art, many rare and highly valued. According to Kieffer guard dogs roamed the hallways of the museum to protect the collection. People began to ask the question, “Why isn’t the museum open to the public?” and eventually the university began to explore the possibility of allowing access to the public. Hope Pressman stated that UO president, Meredith O. Wilson, had the legal counsel at the University of Oregon prepare a contract for Gertrude Bass Warner’s grandson to sign that would put into writing what had already been said verbally by the family. This document would release the University of Oregon from the strictures put upon it by Mrs. Warner when she donated her collection. The document was signed and, according to both Kieffer and Pressman, a “cultural war” broke out with those who supported the gift agreement as stated by Bass Warner (including Miss Maude Kerns, a local and well-respected artist) on one side and those who supported the opening of the museum to the public on the other. When Arthur Flemming became president of the University of Oregon, Kieffer became his sword bearer on the controversy. Eventually the art community settled down and Baldinger began to expand on the museum’s already established collection. As an artist, art professor, and art patron himself, Baldinger began to recognize the Asian influences on regional artists. In a letter written to Virginia in 1963 he remarks about how “highly appropriate” the move to extend the museum’s permanent collections beyond “the Oriental” to include the arts of the Pacific Northwest would be, “where we do have a

genuine meeting of Oriental and Occidental cultures” (Baldinger, 1963, UOMA archives). In 1965 he wrote an article for *Art in America* magazine that defined and established both the region referred to as the Pacific Northwest and the art that was being produced there.

The Pacific Northwest region of which we write is not the vast territory taken by some to comprise British Columbia, Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. As far as artistic production within a given style is concerned, we find the region much narrower and more sharply defined than that—a region owing its identity to a certain prevailing landscape and climate, and its art to a whole row of urban centers. This Northwest region is bounded precisely by mountain ridges: the ridge of the Siskiyou to the south, of the Cascades to the east and the north, of the Olympics and the Coast Range to the west. The region is tied together at the same time by certain river systems, chiefly the Frazier, the Cowlitz, and the Willamette—to compose an entity known to geographers as the Puget Sound-Willamette trough. The cities of Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia, lie toward the northern extremity, while Seattle and Portland come in between, and Eugene marks its southern outpost. (Baldinger, 1965, p. 35)

Baldinger goes on to compare this region’s climate and environment to that of Japan’s and contends that, more than cultural exchange, it is the physical surroundings of the region’s artists that influence the Asian flavor of the northwest art being produced. His interest in extending the UOMA’s collection to include work of

regional artists seemed a natural extension to the vast Asian collection already housed at the museum.

In an interview, Kieffer related how Baldinger experienced first hand the student rebelliousness of the 1960s when he was hung in effigy after denying the master of art students a showing in the museum because some of their art work was, in his opinion, “too raw.” Baldinger’s relationship with the patrons and supporters of the UOMA was much less volatile. Among this group he found a protégé who quickly became a regional arts advocate and, with his help and instruction, her understanding and patronage of local art and artists flourished. This protégé, with Baldinger’s and other art specialist’s guidance, began to purchase regional art which she would then donate to the university’s museum. Her collection grew and her involvement with the museum, with regional artists, and state art organizations, became widely recognized. Baldinger’s most productive pupil and protégé was Virginia Haseltine.

### CHAPTER III

#### VIRGINIA HASELTINE

##### The Early Years

In the early 1940s Virginia Haseltine was living in Portland in an area she, and the other inhabitants, dubbed “the Artists Colony.” She was one of a group of Portland writers living in the southwest hills in what she described in her 1963 catalogue remarks as a, “charming, tumbledown house overlooking the city” which they referred to as “Withering Heights” (The Oregon Collector at Home section, ¶ 7). Virginia was a writer for the *Oregon Journal* newspaper, a correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*, and was the first northwest correspondent for *Mademoiselle* magazine. Before coming to Portland she had been a librarian and a reporter for the *Louisville, Kentucky, Courier-Journal*. When she arrived in Portland she was a widow and a single parent to her son, George Shirley. Her stay in the Artists Colony introduced her to many of Portland’s art critics and art circles. A close friend of Virginia’s, and fellow inhabitant of the Artist’s Colony, was Louise Aaron, another writer for the *Oregon Journal* who had volunteered to cover the arts for the paper in her spare time. Virginia said of her, “She turned out to be one of the potent forces in Portland art circles, rallying the community with strong, sensitive, continuous art coverage for years” (¶ 9.). And it is she that Virginia credits as having led her to the “quiet work of Portland artist C.S. Price and his circle, which was self-consciously trying to “fuse with nature.”” (Bowers, 1975, p.18) Virginia states in her 1963 catalogue that she and Aaron, “agreed that the ‘hill’ excited the creative mind, stirring us to consider the arts seriously” (Haseltine, 1963, ¶ 9). Virginia’s



involvement with regional arts coincided with her arrival to the Pacific Northwest and was supported with the guidance and assistance of fellow art patrons. She describes her early time in Portland and her involvement with regional art circles:

From a place on the fringe of the Portland art world since the middle forties my tastes have been molded by many artist friends and perceptive art patrons. I confess to a sluggish revision of taste altho (sic) I early came to see the power and direction of our regional art movements. I am now not surprised to find the eyes of national and international collectors focused on the Pacific Northwest, sometimes with mercenary intent.

....My devious path to recognition of their [the artist's] message began around 1945. I bow to those friends who illumined my appreciation of our native arts—Thomas J. Colt, Jim Haseltine, the late Louise Aaron Buhman, and Minne (Mrs. Hollis) Johnston. These turned my eyes from appraisal of flat and mediocre surfaces into the subtle directions of intellect and emotions—showed me the fire and spirit of our regional statement, taught me to explore with open mind the intangible mysteries of unknown, unintelligible, and sometimes shocking expressions of form and color which began to appear in Portland exhibitions following the war years. (¶ 3, 5)

During those early years Virginia would use what she called her “egg money” to purchase paintings for \$25 or \$35. Sometimes she would “give the artist a \$10 down payment and \$5 the next week” (Bowers, 1975, p. 20). She characterized her approach to art collecting at that time as a way to help the artists who were around and not as a collector.

In 1946 Virginia married a member of Portland “society” –Bill Haseltine. Himself a widowed, single father of three, Bill Haseltine was much more a follower of regional athletics than of regional arts. His son, Jim Haseltine, however, shared Virginia’s love of arts and influenced her direction in her art collecting. Jim Haseltine was a regional artist himself and later became the executive director of the Washington State Arts Commission. After World War II, Jim was at the core of the regional artist’s circle and helped to educate his stepmother in the unique qualities and expression produced in the Pacific Northwest.

He took us around to exhibitions and introduced us to many friends working seriously in the arts. In the late forties, these young people were all exchanging seedling ideas. They were young, non-conforming, with way-out philosophies. (Bowers, 1975, p.20)

Virginia’s marriage to Bill was also the beginning of her involvement with the University of Oregon. Her husband and all three of his children were alumni and he was such an avid fan of the UO athletic teams that he “accompanied the football team on nearly every out-of-town trip for years. He made a point of personally meeting and getting to know the freshman recruits every fall” (Bowers, 1975, p.18). Of course, the Haseltines went to as many home games as possible so many of Virginia’s weekends were spent exploring Eugene. Hearing of the impressive collection of Asian art housed in the university’s museum, Virginia was anxious to view it,

For twelve years when I had children at the University I tried the great bronze doors in order to see the Murray Warner exhibit but the state could not afford to keep the doors open. When Dr. Baldinger was appointed director in 1954,

there began a fermentation of interest which led to the “open door” and to the organizing of a fast growing statewide organization called “Friends of the Museum.” (Haseltine, 1963, ¶ 24).

Virginia fused her interest in art with her involvement with the university and became a founding member of the Friends of the Museum. With that began her complicated and sometimes difficult friendship and mentoring with Dr. Wallace Baldinger, director of the UOMA.

#### UOMA Collections and Connections

Though having been a collector and art patron for many years Virginia had not found her niche in the regional art world, nor a focus for her vision. The Portland Art Museum relied on the “old” families of Portland for support and involvement and may not have been very welcoming to a second wife who had no connections to the established Portland lineage except through her second husband. Other Portland collectors and gallery owners, more monetarily endowed, could easily arrange for the purchase and promotion of art in Portland. Still using what she called her “egg money” for her art purchases, Virginia could not compete in purchasing pieces by the more noted of the regional artists. She began to purchase the work of lesser-known artists and expanded her collection to include other media such as ceramics. Her interest in the art world was as sharp as ever, but she had not yet found her venue. When Virginia was finally allowed inside the doors of the UOMA she found a museum in dire need of her help. And she responded.

Wallace Baldinger also had vision, and he needed help in setting things in motion. With the opening of the doors to the public also came the need for funding

and support to promote and maintain the museum. Baldinger began by forming a small band of museum patrons called The Friends of the Museum. Among those in this group were Virginia and Hope Pressman. Pressman describes the early encounter in this way,

Wally and his wife, Ellen, developed a really large, socially prominent group of supporters for the museum –the Friends of the Museum—early on. William Russell was the first president of it and he had contacts all over the West Coast –really fine contacts that brought super people onto The Friends of the Museum board. I think Virginia was probably on the early board of Governors for it. Through contacts that Wally developed throughout the state they [Baldinger and his wife] must have run into her. They were real promoters, and when they discovered her, they tied her into the museum.

Also, I think that when Virginia first came to Portland as a single mother, working as a professional journalist who eventually married Bill Haseltine—scion of a long-term Portland family—she wanted a venue for her interest in the arts and that was closed to her at the Portland Art Museum. The UOMA was a perfect venue for her development interests and gave her the inspiration to build it into a position of stature. (H. Pressman, personal communication, March 2002)

In Baldinger, Virginia found a sympathetic and avid regional arts collector with a museum to fill. In Virginia, Baldinger found an enthusiastic and willing assistant in dire need of a focus. Both were very determined people and both possessed a vision of promoting regional art and artists. Lawrence Fong analyzes her

motivations for amassing a collection and establishing it as a focal point for the UOMA in this way:

Her motivations were not dissimilar to women who had the opportunity to contribute to cultural institutions in some form or manner. Not unlike our founding director, Gertrude Bass Warner, ... Virginia comes to that same point in her life where there is a void for her. There were activities that attracted other members of her family to this university, and the director of this art museum at that time, Wallace Baldinger, had an interest in contemporary art of this region. A lot of it was just serendipitous that this was a time where the idea she had for regional art had not been fully conceived of by anyone in the region –perhaps contiguous with Richard Fuller of the Seattle Art museum—but not in any focused way. She saw the idea immediately embraced by people in Seattle and immediately embraced by people in Portland. These people certainly had a lot more means, in terms of money, than Virginia had. So, even though she shared in the shaping of this void for museums to support and represent the art of this time and this place, she still was to be outbid as she was pursuing, at least initially, by what had been identified of the important artists of the time, works by: Kenneth Callahan, Guy Anderson, Morris Graves and Mark Tobey. Her husband was a huge supporter of the athletic department. So, at this time, and at this art museum, it was fairly common for the spouse of someone very much engaged in the support of another department, like the athletic department, that these spouses, ...to be engaged with the art museum. In history you can see [for] women like,

Isabelle Stuart Gardner in Boston, and Peggy Guggenheim in New York, that there was a place in time where, if you had means, and if you had a vision, and if you could find a partner like an art museum to help fulfill an idea like collecting, you could be quite successful (L. Fong, personal communication, April 2002).

Virginia saw a void both in her own life and in the life of the museum. And she was determined to breath new life into both of them. Living in Portland and on the northern coast of Oregon, Haseltine spent many hours composing and sending lengthy correspondences to Baldinger and other people involved with promoting the UOMA. Her letters often consisted of what needed to happen next and suggestions as to whom should be the one to execute its happening. Her journalistic background became evident as her curt, sometimes biting, directions, demands, and criticisms accumulated in the UOMA files. Virginia was a prolific letter writer and her letters were often forceful. In one letter she calls Baldinger “a lousy editor”, in another she threatens to withdraw her collection from the museum. Hope Pressman received her share of Virginia’s missives, she states:

In terms of organizing for the arts early on she was a powerful force, a “pusher” for them...I would get these type written letters from Virginia—she had purple ribbon as I recall on her typewriter. She wasn’t a good typist but you sure got the message. She was sending these messages out all the time for us to do stuff. Every time I’d see that purple ink I’d think, “Oh man, more work!” But that’s ok, that’s the way things get done. (H. Pressman, personal communication, March 2002)

At the same time that Virginia was organizing and involving herself with groups that supported and promoted the arts and the UOMA, she continued to collect regional art for her own enjoyment. In the early 1960s she approached Baldinger about donating her collection to the UOMA and designating it as the *Haseltine Collection of Pacific Northwest Art*. Baldinger enthusiastically agreed.

On May 14, 1963 he responded in a letter to Virginia in this way,

The educational program of the University of Oregon and the cultural enrichment of the Pacific Northwest can be immeasurably advanced by the presence at our Museum of the Haseltine Collection of Pacific Northwest Art. I compliment you on your imagination and zeal in undertaking the amassing of this collection and promise you my assistance and advice in every possible way. (UOMA Archives)

As they explored the unique possibility of setting up a collection limited to regional arts, Virginia sent inquiries to collectors and gallery owners for advice. At this point in time collectors were still looking to east coast and European artists and were not limiting their collecting to west coast artists. Mark Tobey and Morris Graves were eagerly sought after –not because of their recognition as Pacific Northwest painters but as nationally renowned artists who happened to live on the west coast. The majority of their work at this time was still sold in New York. A letter sent to Virginia in 1962 (the letter is undated but located amongst other correspondence of that year) from an east coast collector's assistant identified only as "Toni" responds to Virginia's request for feed-back from east

coast collectors on specific Northwest regional artists and on the idea of establishing a regionally-based collection in this way:

Janis, who controls the sale of several important painters, feels that the way to draw attention to a region is to develop an active museum and active collectors, not to confine the selections on a geographical basis....

B. Jones was noncommittal about the Northwest work as comprising a “school,” but finds the project of collecting it interesting. The Willards [agents of Mark Tobey] said that there is more energy in the Northwest than any place else except New York, whether or not there is a coherent movement of any kind there. There are no hints about buying to be found here. All of the names mentioned have already been recognized to some extent and...[some] are...among the most important in the art world. New York, all of the people said, cannot say much about the unknowns yet because it has not seen them. Someone said that there is a danger of becoming too regional in the collection; that is, I think, that even if the artists are all from the region the subjects bought for the collection should not be confined to regional subjects. One should not hesitate to throw in anything good he can get. —This is all anyone would say about the buying. (UOMA Archives, 1962)

Not to be deterred, Virginia and Baldinger continued to establish her collection specific to Pacific Northwest artists and Virginia’s “egg money” was the source of funding for the majority of purchases. While her husband’s focus was on supporting the university’s athletic program with large donations (he helped to build Autzen Stadium, restore Hayward field, and was a generous donor to the program as a



whole) Virginia would respond in kind by purchasing pieces for the museum. Often times her purchases were kept hidden from her husband, she states in a 1963 letter to Baldinger:

The list of gifts contributed by the Haseltine's impressed even me when the dollar signs are added to the items. Everything looks okeh (sic), except that I haven't yet paid for all of them. I am hoping your list doesn't fall into my husband's hands as he has no idea how much I have spent (UOMA Archives).

Haseltine was determined to build the collection and establish the UOMA as a major center for regional arts. Her appreciation for The Mystics became a driving force as she was resolute to include their works in her collection.

#### Mysticism, Jung, and Synchronicity

In 1960, Baldinger had written and published a book titled, *The Visual Arts*. In it, he addressed all aspects of art from the rudimentary principles of form and texture to an analysis of painting styles and subject matter for photography. His historical perspective included art from ancient civilizations to what was then, in the 1960s, contemporary art. He also included an analysis of a painting by Morris Graves and attributed Graves' distinct style to, "the influence of the Pacific Northwest in which the painter was born and reared and inspired to develop his art" (Baldinger, 1960, p. 281). Baldinger believed that The Mystics, along with other Pacific Northwest artists, reflected in their work the regional area in which they lived and that it was their locale that had the greatest impact on their work. Virginia believed it went beyond that.

At some point during the 1950s, Virginia began a journey of self-awareness. Both Hope Pressman and Henk Pander remember her taking part in Jung conferences at Esalan, both remember her need to discuss her beliefs in mysticism and spirituality. The use of archetypal symbols and the reflection of the connection of humankind and nature bonded Virginia with the work produced by The Mystics. Haseltine acknowledged the relevance of the similarities of land and light found in Japan and other Asian countries to that found in the Pacific Northwest, but she also acknowledged the deep spiritual beliefs held by The Mystics that were based on Eastern and Asian philosophies and religions. She related to their work on a different plane than Baldinger but appreciated his analysis as well. It is unknown whether he could appreciate and understand her interest and fascination with the mystical side of their work. For the 1963 exhibit catalogue for *Pacific Northwest Art: The Haseltine Collection*, Baldinger encouraged Virginia to write a lengthy personal analysis of her involvement with regional arts. Her account documents her early involvement with the arts and the twenty-year journey of revelation and self-discovery leading up to the opening of the exhibit. She forwarded her writing to Baldinger to edit before it was published in the catalogue. Rather than merely correcting her grammar and spelling, Baldinger essentially edited out most of what Virginia had to say. Virginia was furious. Her letter to Baldinger, written on November 19, 1963, pointedly expresses her dismay at Baldinger's censorship of her words:

Wally, I have a great respect for you as a museum director. As an editor you are lousy...I gave you permission to "edit" the copy I sent you and now I find it has been entirely re-written –and badly. The meaning and true

facts are changed in some instances to say nothing of the pure, sincere, spirit of my own words.

...I feel the present copy, as it stands is completely lifeless and it's not mine. Therefore, I am asking for the entire statement to be cut from the catalog. I cannot allow this copy to be published over my signature!

Sorry, Virginia

...p.s., When you said on the phone the other day that I "am crazy" I decided to agree with you. No one else would have spent the thousands of dollars I have spent in order to help you bring this museum to life.

(UOMA Archives)

Virginia's copy was published as originally written. One can only surmise that her catalogue remarks referring to her "air age exploration of the UFO" and the telling of her "mystical saga" of acquiring a painting by Morris Graves did not meet with approval by Baldinger. She also refers to attending a seminar "held by the Guild for Psychological Studies, led by students of the late Dr. C.G. Jung" (Haseltine, 1963, The Oregon Collector at Home section, ¶ 28). And her first purchase of a painting by Morris Graves is described in this way,

For several days I had been absorbed in the psyche, the collective unconscious, the ego, the shadow, and the entire Jungian process of delving into myth and religion as it relates to spiritual growth of the individual.

Through a strange chain of events I was led to a chap who wanted to sell a Graves painting. When I faced it I couldn't believe what I saw...a great

seminal painting...a portrait of the psyche of Everyman in his primordial efforts to push up through dark and primitive cultures, through myth, and symbol, into light.

....We bought it...I arrived home with the purchases to find a letter from Morris Graves, wishing us well, and telling us how interested he is in our museum programs, making suggestions for obtaining his work. The letter was written as we were being led to find "Effort to Bloom". In his recent autobiography, Dr. Jung describes research in such activities as "synchronized phenomena". The Graves story is typical. Once more we discover the spirit of our regional art, and the artist, with pride (§ 28, 29).

Almost assuredly, Baldinger would not have characterized this coincidence in the same way Virginia did. The museum director and the art patron, though both deeply committed and dedicated to establishing a collection of Pacific Northwest art, had very different perspectives on the art itself. Though Virginia relied on Baldinger in many ways, particularly as a mentor in her collecting decisions, she also tapped into the expertise of gallery owners and other art experts of the area. Lawrence Fong mentions Barbara McLarty in Portland, Wesley Wehr in Seattle, and her stepson Jim Haseltine as others who gave Virginia advice and consultation in her purchasing and collecting decisions. Yet, it was the relationship of Baldinger and Virginia that produced a respected and recognized collection that started a trend in the art world – the collecting of regional art.

### Religion and Regionalism

By the mid to late 1960s Virginia was frustrated with the slow development of the museum and of her collection. She was resentful that her inquiries and directions were not addressed as quickly or as efficiently as she wanted; she felt that she alone held the vision of establishing a recognized collection. She found little support for her endeavor by her family members. Many of her prolific letters were directed to the artists themselves, and she developed friendships with many of them. Virginia was upset that the four artists most important to her had never resolved the bitterness that had developed between them. A letter to Kenneth Callahan and his wife in 1966 indicates yet another attempt at establishing her vision of creating a unique collection of regional art. She wrote,

Dear Callahans: I do want to talk some more about the idea of lighting up the art world with a revival (I hate the word) of the spirit of the Seattle group which is not only timely but necessary and I think that it should come spontaneously from us in this region. I have discussed this with Seattle friends and patrons and as I told Joanna [Eckstein of Seattle] we should try to assemble as much of the works of your group in this region and since there is enough to go round for our museums and patrons, there is no reason to get twitchy about "competition" altho [sic] this element must enter in I suppose. It is merely a question of selling our own people in this region on purchasing and giving to our own museums and Universities and we can do this more easily by working together.

Since I now know that all of you are religiously motivated in your art expressions I would hope that all of you as individuals would make a conscious effort to follow the basic laws of life and love...the universal laws of all great religions and therefore it seems that forgiveness all around and working together in full view of the world public would present the perfect example of “using” the laws to which you all ascribe. There is no doubt in my mind that all of you were doing your best work when working closely with each other in this mother region.

Is this only a lovely dream of mine or is it something which can be a directed reality? Graves certainly clammed up and refused to react to my questions and my impression was that he would like to forget and to forgive. As I told you he talked with me at great length several times about deep personal matters with no sense of withholding these matters related only to his own personal growth. He has done much soul searching in recent years and is tremendously nostalgic. It is true perhaps that you can't go back together in the flesh but you can go in the spirit...this to effect the great spiritual force which you all have striven for these many years....

If you people, the artists, will go along with us we can set up a regional committee for purchase and exhibiting and publicising [sic] ..a program study for the schools and so on as a regional arts project. Think how we have all left the beaten tract to go to Toledo to see El Grecos...or gone to Kroller-Muller, or Louisiana, museums because someone in a quiet way has

cared about their own art and artists! We can do it here. (Haseltine Correspondence, 1966, UOMA archives)

Her idea of building a collection of regional artists was still a concept not shared or accepted by many. The artists themselves questioned the value of regionalism as an aspect of their work. Kenneth Callahan's response to Virginia puts into words his questioning of her idea,

I don't know how a support of the kind you speak of can be brought about—I would be happy to see it, I do feel that if anyone can achieve the end you can—the other part of the idea to bring a greater regional realization of the peculiar character and accomplishments of this area's artists—and in turn national realizations—is, as you say, a very important/exciting idea—it has long since been overdue—...I do feel that unless the area's institutions realize and show the world, so to speak—that the artists of the area have something special and important—...not just bright promising artists who may some day be a success and reach New York—but are a part of the life and culture here—a significant part—until this occurs it is not likely national considerations will be given except to a few—which is what has happened to date—you would be surprised, I think, how often East Coast artists in talking to me think I live in New York or on the East Coast. I do not mind this, it's not important one way or another to me personally—but it certainly means I am only partially identified with this area—I'm sure Tobey and Graves have found this a frequent thing.

For myself I feel I am an artist—I prefer to live in [the] Pacific Northwest and to work here—whether or not I am identified in people’s minds with this area or another means absolutely nothing one way or another—At the same time, I recognize unless this identification is made (not just for a few people) but including selected totality of artists—the kind of spirit you see [and] have seen will not be reborn—you may well be the catalyst that brings this about—Enthusiasm like yours, coupled with material as you possess is what is necessary—I’m taking for granted your sensitivity to act—this is infectious—if you carry on I’m confident you will see real results that could be important to all artists of the area as well as contributing greatly to general cultural standards of area and in terms to contemporary America—I do not think it is too late today –if much more time lapses without the effort it will be too late—it’s an important thing you are doing and I wish you all success.

Kenneth C. (Callahan, UOMA Archives)

Virginia’s frustrations grew with the inability to acquire highly sought-after works to include in the exhibit. She was angry at the lack of support she was getting both from the state and the museum. In a 1966 letter to Baldinger she admonishes him and threatens to pull out of the project all together:

...I feel strongly that we must cancel our plans unless we can include at least one major work by Mark Tobey in our show. Otherwise, we will not be noticed favorably in any review on the national level. Therefore, we must obtain a major Tobey as soon as possible. And we must advance our own publicity program at once!



It would seem too bad to abandon the museum project at this point. I appreciate all the University has done to this point. And I believe that what I have done is appreciated. But I can't do any more for several years. I simply can't understand why you can't get more patronage money out of Lane County when there is so much money there... After ten years of activity, I can't understand this. (UOMA Archives)

Jarold Kieffer remembers having to placate Virginia and in a letter asks her, "why let a lifetime of help ooze away for a simple disappointment?" He stated in his interview with me that though she had "a hard shell", when frustrated "she became almost weepy... Then we would shore her up and she would be okay." (J. Kieffer, personal communication, March 2002)

Her deep spirituality kept her connected with the art project, and in particular, with the work being produced by Morris Graves. Building on the regional aspect of her collection, Virginia felt that the religious and spiritual mien of the work should be emphasized as well. In letters to the artists she discovers that The Mystic's various, though similar, beliefs in religion had indeed had a profound impact on the work they produced. Virginia felt it was important to emphasize that aspect because, as yet, it had not been synthesized in a coherent way. In another letter to Baldinger, written approximately in 1967, Virginia tried to establish the need to recognize the religious overtones of the work being produced,

I would suggest that someone be asked to do a major thesis on some of these subjects or at least the Seattle group and their religious orientations.

This is timely today and I feel it is good for getting some money to underwrite our museum collection.

The trouble is that nobody but me seems to believe that these artists were truly making deep religious statements and it is possible that at the time they did not know that they were. But in retrospect, Anderson, Callahan, and Graves now are willing to admit that the religious ideas were strong influences and as you can see, Callahan says that statement is long overdue.

I can promise you one thing that unless we say it loud and clear within the next few months someone else will run with the ball and make hay with the idea! (Haseltine correspondence, date unknown, UOMA Archives)

#### The Graves-At-Oregon Project

Morris Graves, more than the other Mystics, was the native son of Oregon and the exemplar of Pacific Northwest Art. Graves was born in Fox Valley, Oregon and spent the majority of his life in Oregon and the northwest. His work was an “effort to communicate through art a sense of unity with nature” (Shankman, 1991, n.p.). To Virginia, his work embodied the elements that would connect him to her for the rest of her life, both spiritually and esthetically. In an article written in 1976 for the UO publication, *Old Oregon*, Virginia is quoted as saying of one of Graves’ paintings that,

...she would wake up at night and go downstairs to sit before it. “I never felt that way about anything in my life. The painting charged me creatively, emotionally, spiritually. That experience converged with the impact on me of Jung” (Bowers, 1975, p. 20).

Virginia had first discovered works by Graves decades earlier. At the time she could not compete financially to purchase the art that so affected her. Early on in her collecting she was determined that works by Graves would be a focal point of her dedication to Pacific Northwest art.

In 1963 Virginia asked UO President Arthur Flemming to write to Graves and indicate the museum's desire to "serve as the central repository for all documents, sketches, studies and correspondences connected with [Graves'] works." Flemming emphasized the "not only appropriate, but a natural development that the museum evolve as a focal point for the collection and exhibition of the works of artists from the Pacific Northwest" and indicated the Friends of the Museum's developing plans and support for the realization of the project. Lacking her own personal funds to obtain the now fashionable work by Graves, Virginia campaigned to find donors or state support to obtain works to complement her growing collection. In a letter to Baldinger she wrote,

I am getting some letters off to a few persons relative to buying the three Graves: Journey III, Indian Bird, and Crane. If they can't be purchased for the museum I am afraid they will have to be sold otherwise as I am terribly in debt and have absolutely no help from any other Haseltine! (Haseltine, 1963, UOMA Archives)

She pushed the UOMA to officially declare a Graves-At-Oregon project. In a letter dated December 3, 1963 Virginia urged Hope Pressman to do so,

Dear Hope, ...I believe you know the story of my correspondence with Mr. Graves this past year and how he came to the campus to meet with the

acquisitions committee in October and told us he would like to help us gather a great representative collection of his work at the University. He is quite serious about this. I think we should be also. He was born in Fox Valley and is internationally known as a truly great twentieth century painter. Miss Maude Kerns says that he is “the spirit and the presence of the Orient in U.S. art” which is another reason for us to collect him in relation to the Murray Warner collection

...The board will have two decisions to make: first, to decide if it wishes a major collection of Graves and you possibly will give them one reason we discussed: a Graves collection might help to gain Foundation help in building a new museum wing. Secondly, is the board or anyone on the board, serious about getting a great collection of Northwest Art for the museum as are the Haseltines? (UOMA Archives)

Pressman responded to the letter a few weeks later and indicated that at the Board of Governor's meeting of December 6, 1963 a statement of policy was adopted that stated that the “major objective henceforth will be the establishment of the museum as a major repository and exhibition center of Pacific Northwest Art.” Pressman also states that the board decided not to be the principal home of paintings of Morris Graves because of “lack of funds.” The decision was later reversed and when Baldinger publicized the Graves-At-Oregon project, he stated that the board of directors had, “in 1963 passed unanimously to make the Museum of Art of the University of Oregon the principle home of paintings and memorabilia by Morris

Graves” (Baldinger, 1967, The Graves-At-Oregon Project Appraisal, UOMA Archives).

In a letter date January 28, 1964, Morris Graves himself acknowledged this pledge when, in a letter to Virginia from Ireland, the artist wrote:

I am now beginning to clear out my studio here for eventual return to the U.S. In the early 1950’s I had a great clearing out to my Edmonds studio followed by a great bonfire. I now somewhat regret this burning because it included all letters received over the years –say from 1935—including many letters from Mark Tobey etc.

The present accumulation of such letters and documents –saved perhaps a bit too methodically because of my regrets from having burned the earlier accumulation—is the sort of thing you and Dr. Flemming propose saving for the University of Oregon art department (Graves, UOMA Archives).

Graves maintained a correspondence and friendship with Virginia and visited her Oregon coast home several times. Virginia stated that one of her fondest memories was “of Graves amid the sea of dune grass surrounding [my] home near Gearhart” (Bowers, 1976, p. 20). It seems evident that the stimulus to continue the project and renew the drive to obtain the designation of being the largest repository of Graves’ work came not from Baldinger or Virginia but from the artist himself.

Though Graves was known the world over, and his work was in high demand, he was experiencing financial difficulties. He contacted both Baldinger and Virginia and asked for funding. The implication being that in exchange for the promise of his works they would, in turn, help him financially on a personal level. Virginia was torn

between her desire to help both Graves and the UOMA and her need to placate her family. In 1967 she responded to Baldinger's reaction to Graves' request for money,

Dear Wally... We both want to help Morris because we believe in the power and the glory of his work. I especially would go overboard because he and his work have truly lifted me to another dimension of consciousness. I am truly sorry I can't write a check now to send him but I am so bound with my love and respect for Jim and Bill that I must go along with them now and be reasonable and not charitable. ... I keep thinking a miracle ought to happen. I feel so trapped in time, money, and all the binding tapes of this mundane world... truly helpless because I am surrounded by reasonable people whom I love and respect. Love to you both, (and to him)... VA (UOMA Archives)

By this time, Virginia had been involved with the UOMA for a decade.

Though her determination to establish the Haseltine Collection as the seminal compilation of Pacific Northwest art was still strong, her attention and energy were waning. Virginia had found other outlets to her creative energy and was withdrawing from the UOMA. Theater groups in Portland were becoming a focus for her. She had written a play in the 1950s about an 18<sup>th</sup> century feminist titled, *The London Hussy*, based on the life of Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *Frankenstein*. Virginia was determined to see it produced again though it had been performed at the Portland Civic Theatre years earlier. She indicates her withdrawal from the UOMA to Baldinger in a letter dated July 12, 1967,

... I must have time to think where I now enter the picture with regard to the Graves project even tho, [sic] as you say, I initiated it and carried it

alone for too long a time. What I will do in the future will be determined by a number of things.

First, a strong University organization setup in the highly efficient way of the athletic department is long overdue for underwriting in arts program around the museum. The organization should have gone into high shortly after the board passed the motion to adopt the Pacific Northwest Art (to include Graves) in 1963, while I was still around and filled with proper zeal if I were to be of help.

What I will do from now on depends on what the University will do at once because I am fast losing interest as I am highly involved in another extremely creative project of my own and frankly, don't want to be bothered any more.

Secondly, if I am to become "patron" to Morris directly by advancing a huge sum of money at once for purchase of those offered works now available I will have to use my own money and defy the advice of Bill and Jim Haseltine. However, since I am the one who has been deeply benefited spiritually and aesthetically by Graves works, I suppose that it is I who has the moral obligation to support him at this time.

However, when I consider this I see that Graves and his works were only "instruments" toward the development of my own spiritual consciousness along the way and that I owe far more to the Jungian Institute and its highly recreative [sic] program. So, if I am to buy Graves' works in

gratitude, perhaps I should also consider a gift to the Jungians far more important? (UOMA Archives)

In a letter to Baldinger's wife, Ellen, written at the end of the 60s, Virginia once more expresses her frustration at not being able to fully support Graves' request and her own withdrawal from the project,

Dear Ellen...you must know how much I appreciate having you and Wally pick up the glove where I dropped it with Graves. I appreciate your spontaneous generosity to him as much as he did. My own life would be much lovelier if my husband understood the subtleties of mystics and artists as yours does. (Haseltine, 1969?)

The Morris Graves archival collection was given by the artist to the UOMA in 1967 and, although Virginia appeared to have pulled back from the project, she is credited as the one who facilitated its donation. As the main initiator of the project Virginia's drive and determination was the reason for its transpiration. Today, the Graves-At-Oregon project is the largest accumulation of works by Morris Graves and it is to Virginia's credit that this remarkable collection is housed at the UOMA. It continues to have an impact on the art world and Lawrence Fong acknowledges the Graves collection with having attracted other sources and donations of Graves' work.

Certainly the fact that she had successfully brought Graves' paintings to this art museum, other Graves painting come to us, notably the Nancy Wilson Ross collection. I seriously doubt that that collection would have come to us without the Graves archival collection...For us, terribly important in terms of



how she established this museum's commitment to regional art. (L. Fong, personal communication, April 2002).

## CHAPTER IV

### SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Purpose of the Project

My purpose in this project was to examine the affect to which Virginia Haseltine contributed to the regional art recognition of the Pacific Northwest and how she helped to establish the UOMA as a regional art center. Using information gathered from interviews and articles I was able to analyze the impact she had on the regional art world. I looked at the decade of the 1960s and, through retrospection, acknowledged trends and lifestyles that helped to show what the art scene was like during this period in the Pacific Northwest. I presented how Virginia was connected to the art and artists of the northwest on several levels and how, through her vision and determination, established the region as a unique and valuable art locus.

A summary of the legacy of Virginia is followed by comments from those I interviewed who knew Virginia. In the final section of this chapter, I give recommendations for further research complementary to this subject.

#### The Later Years

By the end of the 1960s, Virginia had seen many of her projects come to fruition. The UOMA had received the archival collection of Morris Graves, as well as her own collection that included over 350 artworks and became the museum's second largest collection after the Asian art bequest of Gertrude Bass Warner. In the late 1960s, the American Federation of Arts circulated her collection throughout the country on one of its first national tours of art from Oregon and Washington. In

addition to her collection, Virginia established an endowment providing for the care of the artworks and for new acquisitions. Through Virginia's efforts the UOMA set up its own traveling exhibition program called the Statewide Services. In 1966 she was appointed by Governor Mark O. Hatfield to serve on the Governor's Planning Council for the Arts and Humanities. The Oregon Arts Commission evolved from this council.

Later on in life Virginia was publicly recognized for her life-long commitment to the arts. Virginia's efforts to promote regional arts were evidenced by being the first person awarded a Pioneer Award by the University of Oregon in 1979, and by the presentation of the Governor's Award for the Arts in 1985.

During the 1960s Virginia and her husband, Bill resided at Surf Pines, their retirement home located on the Oregon coast at Gearhart. "It was beautifully decorated, filled with art treasures" (H. Pressman, 2002, personal communication). When her husband became ill they moved to Portland and lived in a condominium in the center of the city. After Bill's death in 1978, Virginia lived alone until her own death in 1991 at the age of 85. Active until the end, Henk Pander remembers meeting her in the 1980s while both were active with the Storefront Theatre —where she was still trying to get her play produced. He described her as a,

...very nice, single, somewhat lonely, old woman who sort of scattered around here in Portland...there was a kind of ditzyness about her too and she would wander off—at the end of her life she was extremely forgetful—so she would start talking about some complicated spiritual concept of which I didn't know a thing and she would get lost in it. She'd lose her train of thought, she

had a sort of wonderful directionlessness” (H. Pander, 2002, personal communication).

In 1983 Virginia sat for Pander for two portraits, one of which hangs in the UOMA. In a June 13, 2000 news release publicizing the final exhibit of the UOMA before closing its doors for an extensive remodeling project, Lawrence Fong states, “The painterly characteristics of Pander’s stunning painting of Haseltine are true to life. Vision and perseverance defined Haseltine’s pursuit of building an art collection that represented the art of her lifetime in Oregon.”

([http://comm.uoregon.edu/newsreleases/latest/jun100/P0613100\\_3.html](http://comm.uoregon.edu/newsreleases/latest/jun100/P0613100_3.html))

This final exhibition was titled, “Heritage of Northwest Art: The Virginia Haseltine Collection.”

### The Legacy

When asked, “What do you consider to be Virginia Haseltine’s legacy?” the four individuals I interviewed responded as follows:

- Hope Pressman –The enhanced awareness and appreciation for the artists of Oregon. She was a powerful force in developing that. And her interest in the University of Oregon Museum of Art. It’s people like her that have made a difference. She was a force.
- Jarold Kieffer –Virginia’s willingness to be out in front in the encouragement of people to recognize Pacific Northwest art and artists certainly was a part of her legacy. I regarded her as the strongest person in that direction. She always felt the UO could have had a bigger mark on the art world if it became an outstanding proponent of Pacific Northwest art, and she kept urging us to think more

creatively in that emphasis. However, the state's funding problems repeatedly knocked the props out from under useful initiatives. I know that this pattern discouraged her a great deal.

- Lawrence Fong –That having artists surviving as artists through collecting and through patronage or matronage makes one's community so much more diverse, rich, less conventional. In some ways artists can respond to very difficult or taboo kinds of subject matter that professionals and other people in the community cannot. And I think what I see as her legacy is the fact that she recognized that, she recognized that if artists could survive as artists through her support that was going to make for a better world for her and our society.
- Henk Pander –I think her legacy is her collection at the University of Oregon Museum of Art –The Virginia Haseltine Collection –that's her legacy and it has everything in it.

In addition to their opinions my research has led me to believe that Virginia's legacy would also include her fierce determination to find acceptance in the art world of the unique concept of Pacific Northwest Art, and of recognizing the importance of collections comprised only of regional artists. Virginia was the forerunner of promoting other art forms (particularly ceramics) in her collection rather than limiting it strictly to paintings and drawings. The UOMA will also be recognized nationally henceforth because of her accomplishment with the Graves-At-Oregon Project. Virginia's dedication to the art and artists of this region is a lasting legacy that contemporary artists today may have no idea exists but who are the recipients of her vision just the same.

### Recommendations for Further Study

In researching this project I came upon several other personalities that could lead to interesting exploration. Several of the people are closely related to this project, others have vague connections. They are:

- Henk Pander, Portland artist. Pander received training in his native country, the Netherlands, and relocated to Portland, Oregon, in the 1960s. He is known for his sometime surreal portraits (Governor Tom McCall, Virginia Haseltine, and others) and has done a series of paintings on the New Carissa ship wreck as well many other large documentations of natural disaster and contemporary issues. Pander has become a well-known artist throughout the country.
- Rolf Klep, technical illustrator. Klep was a contemporary of Virginia who played an integral part in securing the Graves-at-Oregon Project. He was also very involved with the UOMA in the 1960s. A graduate of the UO's art program, Klep became a recognized technical illustrator and is known for his "nautical and aeronautical illustrations for great national and international publications. ...He was one of the first to use the air brush in illustration in the early thirties. [His painting,] the "Egg of Power" was one of three paintings carried in Life Magazine's article called the "Age of the A Plane" and was an original concept of the plane and power plant...a "spawn child of nuclear aircraft propulsion"" (Haseltine, 1963, ¶ 18).
- Gordon Gilkey, university dean and museum director. Gilkey had served as senior arts professor at Oregon State University and later held a position with the

Portland Art Museum. Gilkey was chosen chairman of the Governors Advisory Council on the Arts and Humanities in the 1960s. Gilkey helped form the Oregon Arts Commission

- Dennis Gould, art administrator. Gould was a graduate of the masters of fine arts program at the UO. Fresh from graduate school, Gould was hired to head up the UOMA's traveling arts program (Statewide Services.) Later Gould was selected to head the Smithsonian's national traveling arts program and then hired to direct the Getty Museum. Today, he is retired and living in the woods near Noti, Oregon.
- Jarold Kieffer, UO administrator from 1963 – 1967. As executive officer to the president, Kieffer taught public administration courses and was dean of the school of Community Service and Public Affairs. Kieffer served as Executive Director of the project to create a national center for the performing arts which was later called the Kennedy Center. Kieffer currently lives in the state of Virginia.
- Wallace Baldinger, director of the UOMA from the mid 1950s until the late 1960s. Baldinger was an art teacher, scholar, collector and critic. He wrote, *The Visual Arts* and authored many articles on art that were printed in various periodicals. Baldinger traveled extensively and maintained an expansive art collection.
- Gertrude Bass Warner, Asian art collector. Bass Warner established the vast Asian collection known as the Murray Warner collection at the UOMA. Virginia referred to her as the "Fairy Godmother of the University of Oregon Museum of

Art.” Kieffer stated in his interview that most of the collection was “taken out of China after the Boxer Rebellion of 1900.”

- Franz R. Stenzel, a cardiologist in Portland, Oregon, from 1946 until 1970. Stenzel began studying and collecting northwest art in 1956 and “amassed the largest private collection of early Pacific Northwest paintings” (<http://www.yale.edu/opa/ycb/v26.n29.news.01.html>). Stenzel was the author of two books based on his collections and research: *Cleveland Rockwell, Scientist and Artist, 1937 – 1907*; and *James Madison Alden: Yankee Artist of the Pacific Coast, 1954 – 1860*. Though an Oregon resident, Stenzel was not cultivated by the UOMA. A 1963 letter found among the Haseltine files in the UOMA archives from the director of Special Collections addresses Baldinger’s inquiry about the propriety of asking Stenzel for his collection to become part of the UOMA. He states that, “such a request would be inappropriate at this time, and would result in positive harm.” The letter indicates Stenzel’s disinterest in the UOMA and says, “he moves in social circles that are beyond our reach and has patients of the ‘right’ kind.” It goes on to say, “no one, in the field of art and architecture, has showed the slightest interest in him or his collecting.... Under such circumstances we would insult him with an approach designed to get his collection.” Before his death, at age 92, Stenzel donated his vast collection of western art to Yale University.
- Francis Tour, art patron. I know very little of Tour but found reference to her in the oral history transcript of Kenneth Callahan located at the Oregon Historical Society library. He refers to her as, “the Gertrude Stein of Mexico City.” Her



frequent guests included Callahan, Tobey, Diego Rivera and many other artists. She also played host to the likes of Martha Graham, Louie Horst, and other performing art personalities of the 1950s and 60s.

In addition to these personalities that would benefit from further exploration, my research has raised other questions that I did not address in this project. For an expanded look into the life of Virginia Haseltine, and to explore more thoroughly Pacific Northwest art and artists, I would also answer these questions:

- What was Virginia's life like in the decades before and after the 1960s?
- How did The Mystics contribute in other ways to the art world?
- Who were The Mystics as individuals and what characterized their art separately?
- Why was the small town of LaConner, Washington, home to so many artists?
- Who were some of the other artists represented in the Haseltine Collection?
- Knowing that most, or all, of The Mystics were employed by the WPA as muralists during the Depression, do their murals still exist? If so, where are they located?
- Who were other prominent art patrons and matrons and how did they influence Virginia's collecting? How did their approach differ from Virginia's?
- How did Virginia get involved with Jungian philosophy and what was its impact on her life?
- Who were some of Virginia's advisors regarding her collection and what was their impact on the art scene of Portland and Seattle?

APPENDIX A:  
COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS:  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DOCUMENTS

APPENDIX B:  
SUBJECT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

## **INTERVIEW WITH HENK PANDER**

**MARCH 15, 2002**

**IN HIS PORTLAND STUDIO**

(Before taping began, I was shown the “other” portrait of Virginia Haseltine, painted in 1985, titled “*Terminator*” Definition of ‘terminator’ refers to the astronomical phenomena of light on the moon – “when the light is on the cusp of twilight and defines the shapes and craters” and exaggerates the shadows and reflections to emphasize the surface. In the portrait, Virginia’s face and hands are detailed, weathered, aged, moon above is similarly detailed. Looking upward, an old lady looking toward the heavens. A study in aging. Family did not like, did not understand. They associated title with action movies, not lighting. Recently, a granddaughter heard the explanation of the painting and likes it/better understands. (A feeling that it is misunderstood by the rest of the family by Pander.)

### **IN WHAT CAPACITY DID YOU KNOW VIRGINIA HASELTINE?**

There are people who know her a lot better than I because I am an immigrant and I just came here in the mid-60s and I got to know her much later in life but she had a long history in this community. She had been actively collecting quite a lot of work here over the years. I knew her –I’ve been trying to think how I knew her. I didn’t know her until the early 80s when we were both interested in helping out with the Storefront Theatre. She was involved with the Oregon Arts Commission in some capacity. She was also close friends with a person who had an arts TV program –a man named “Bob”. He is not alive anymore. A very nice man. They were close friends and I knew him because he had interviewed me a number of times for various things.

I think that when I painted Tom McCall that sort of put me on a different pedestal I suppose. But she was very gracious and I liked her a lot. We got to know her personally. As she got older she got lonely and she would call me and we would meet for dinner in restaurants. She was just a very nice, single, somewhat lonely, old woman who sort of scattered around here in Portland. I never met her husband. She was alone and lived in the condominium by herself. She had a lot of books. She wrote a play –maybe that’s where it was. She tried to get the Storefront to produce it. I think it was an autobiography.

### **WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, WERE HER MOTIVATIONS FOR COLLECTING ART?**

I don’t know. She had an affinity for it. A feeling for it. She had a very romantic vision of the arts and she was drawn to the Northwest romantic/mystical painters. She was involved in some kind of mystical order. She was intrigued by it. She was very involved in a Jungian Institute. Ursula LeGuinn might have known her. I gave a

talk –was invited to speak at a Jungian conference in San Francisco. It was really about space and inheriting space and finding a new language for that. It was all the science fiction writers –Joseph Campbell, Gene Rodenberry, Schwiebert the astronaut, and Ursula. Somehow, I was an artist and Ursula invited me. It was a two-day conference at the Palace of Fine Art. I was the last speaker and I had never done anything like that. There were all these extremely famous speakers who all said, “it’s really the artist who has the answers –it’s the artist’s handprint on the future.” I thought, “oh my God, I’m the last speaker!” I got nervous and nervous –most of the two days I had sweaty palms and everything. Of course, once I got on the podium I had no problem, it was exciting.

### **WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE *MYSTIC PAINTERS*?**

Mark Tobey, Graves, she was interested in a painter here, Carl Morris.....

Callahan. That’s sort of a generation of artists out of the Northwest that I don’t know much about –really before my time. She did have a big house once with a lot of art in it. In Gearhart I think. [*Connection of those four and mystic/nature/metaphysical stuff*] She somehow thought that I was connected to that too but I’m more interested in physics and science, I’m not really a mystical kind of guy. I was extremely skeptical about her thing but there was a kind of ditzyness about her too and she would wander off –at the end of her life she was extremely forgetful –so she would start talking about some complicated spiritual concept of which I didn’t know a thing about and she would get lost in it --she’d lose her train of thought, she had a sort of wonderful directionless.

### **WHAT WERE HER CONTRIBUTIONS TO PACIFIC NORTHWEST ART?**

I think her contributions are really self-evident. She purchased and supported a lot of Northwest artists and really believed in art of the Northwest rather than in international art. She had a real sense for the region. She was from here and supported artists living in the region. I think that was it. You live here, and the world is a big place but you get involved where you live.

I grew up in the Netherlands –Amsterdam-- and I came out here in the 60s. Why, don’t ask. I had my first wife, she was American. I met her in Amsterdam We had two kids. At least I’m not in Pittsburgh—I ended up in this town I’d never heard of but it turned out to be a very beautiful place to live. Anyway, in a big city like Amsterdam things are not accessible. There’s far more politics. Especially when I came here in the 60s. It was a small community but still had a lot of ambition. I was ambitious myself. I could grow with it. There’s a lot of things I have been able to do here that I couldn’t have there. It was extremely small and clique-ish. Still is to an extent. I had really no –I came out of such an entirely different background and such an entirely different cultural point of view. Much bigger. Worldly. I came out of post-war Amsterdam. Portland seemed small, isolated, a provincial capital of artists who had an entirely different background than I. I had no affinity for a lot of the work being produced here. I had no connection with it. A lot of people were trying to emulate the thoughts coming out of New York. A drive here to be progressive. A lot of it seemed utterly alien to me. Like landing on Mars. I’ve never felt like I’ve fit in.

Maybe I do fit in and don't know it. I don't know. I've worked hard here but there's been a disconnect. As you live here, you get to know people but at the time I found it very, very, difficult. There were a lot of mistakes made. Personally. I was at the time very—I used erotic imagery in my paintings at the time. There was a war going on here and I started using violent kinds of things—sort of imagery. I disconnected my own life was utterly wrapped it in. Leaving my family behind, I had left my own country behind—I had been a successful artist in Amsterdam. Nobody out here knew me—and this war, demonstrations, hostility. There was a great upheaval in my own life so I painted it in my work. Expressing war.. and so there was a great responsive and a huge controversy and I got involved with this controversy—a scandal. I was totally unprepared for dealing with any of that. It was difficult. I don't have very fond memories of my relationship with the art community at the time. The theater kind of saved me a little. There were a lot of people who were kind of disaffected who came from New York to work at Portland State to work in the theater department and they got swept up in the political situation and started doing guerilla theatre and street theater. Started developing conflicts with the management at Portland State—and they were fired—very, very fine actors who were all of a sudden set loose without any way of ...and they couldn't very well go back to New York—they had their life here. Their kids were here. There were a lot of people at loose ends—gay designers who couldn't find a place and all these people were drawn together and started this little theater. And I started to coincidentally --got to know some of these people. People involved in radical politics, anti-war politics. I had taken set design courses at the academy in Amsterdam so I was drawn to that place and I started to design sets. I did that for a long time. It sort of saved me.

#### **WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE VIRGINIA HASELTINE'S LEGACY?**

I think her legacy is her collection at the UO Museum. The Virginia Haseltine collection—that's her legacy and it has everything in it. There's a big crafts aspect to the arts world out here. Influenced by the far-East. Japan I think—people actually go to Japan and build Japanese-style kilns. Very authentic out here—this area. A nature-mystical aspect to it. People go burn fires in the woods, clay and fire. There's a lot of nature out here of course. Aspects of the wilderness and I think it influences artists. I tend to be coming out of an urban world I tend to have more of an urban focus... But I find myself painting out in the landscape quite a bit. I like to be out in it. Lately I have been painting a lot of portraits. Last year I was dealing with technology—aging, falling apart, ruins, time, things which are worn.... Also modern world, the war, I've lived through lots of wars in my life. Seems like this country is in perpetual warfare. These wars are imprinted into the landscape and I look for those things. Technological installations and technology in the wilderness—aircraft, science fiction, wreckage. I've painted a series of the New Carissa. I also like painting people—portraits of people. Lately I've been craving to paint people. More personal, more intimate works. I also like big collages. Those *[pictures on studio wall]* came straight out of Manhattan. The World Trade Center. I find those things extremely powerful and interesting. I relate them to warfare—American conflict. This huge scene. Still life-like. I'm a little afraid of it—everyone is so involved with it. Sort of a

dangerous subject. So political. I'm starting to make drawings –I look at them every day and they become familiar. I could practically draw them from sight. I look at them and they become more and more part of my mental image. I'm about to start a series of paintings interpreting these images.....

**Other Comments –**

I had a different studio when I was painting her portrait. I had the canvas on a home-built easel. It was an extremely detailed painting. She was in the process of telling me her life story for about the 10<sup>th</sup> time and I was going to crank the easel up so I could work on the lower part of the painting—I put down my brushes and the damn painting let go. The clamp. So in order to save the painting... this painting came sailing down and my reaction was to let go and grab the painting so my fingers streaked along the canvas. You can still see it in the painting. As I grabbed the painting, the crank slammed my knee. So not only is the painting coming down but I was blinded by pain. It was so heavy, Virginia gave out a loud scream, it was total mayhem. I damaged the painting –so I went to my friend who is a technological genius and asked him to build me another easel. That was an adventure for Virginia and stimulus for me to get a new easel.

**INTERVIEW WITH HOPE PRESSMAN  
MARCH 18, 2002  
IN HER HOME IN EUGENE, OREGON**

**QUESTIONS #1 –IN WHAT CAPACITY DID YOU KNOW VIRGINIA  
HASELTINE?**

As a friend first, and co-worker in the arts vineyard –working in the field. Organizing for the arts is what I was intent on. I don't have any background in the arts in terms of schooling or anything. My development in the arts came through Wally Baldinger of the museum –as a volunteer and my involvement enabled me to develop friendships throughout the entire state. Virginia was one of those because she was building the Haseltine Collection at the museum, using Wally Baldinger as her “guru” for it. In fact, in building that collection, she used to say that she would take her *egg money* to make the purchases because she didn't feel she was a wealthy woman at all but she was deeply interested in the arts and in providing support for artists of the Northwest. She was very admiring of them. She purchased as much as she could of their work for the museum –and that's the basis of our Northwest collection. She worked with Rolf Klep as a wonderful resource and colleague— going with him around the state promoting the museum early on, i.e., “carrying the flag”, as she said, “for the museum.” She and Rolf were the driving force for obtaining the collection of archival work of Morris Graves. She was passionate about her interest in, and support for, the arts of the Northwest.

In terms of the museum, there had not been any interest among the museums in the Northwest in collecting the works of NW artists –particularly Oregon. The Portland Art museum was doing very little of it and Arlene Schnitzer –she would be a good one to talk with—had a gallery, the Hughes Gallery, that featured works of Oregon and Northwest artists. So she and Virginia, I think, were probably the two women in this state who were really seminal in advancing the works of Oregon artists.

**#2 What, in your opinion, were her motivations for collecting art?**

She just loved art. She admired the artists. She had a deeply spiritual side to her that made her really in tune with the artists. The arts speak to the spirit... and in terms of organizing for the arts, early on, she was a powerful force, a “pusher” for them so for me, I would just do what anybody told me to do. Virginia was the inspiration and the promoter, and Jerry Kieffer was the facilitator—he knew the ins and outs and the how to's politically—and I just did what the two of them said to do, so we made a good team. I would get these type written letters from Virginia—she had purple ribbon as I recall on her typewriter. She wasn't a good typist but you sure got the message. She was sending these messages out all the time for us to do stuff. Every time I'd see that purple ink I'd think, “Oh man, more work!” But that's ok. That's the way things get done. Jerry was the know-how man but she was crucial in terms of the energy and commitment and perseverance. She was really a force for the arts and artists. There's no way getting around that. I don't know if it's in the files in the UO museum, but she wrote a paper on Gertrude Bass Warner, calling her “the fairy Godmother of the



Museum of Art.” I used to send it out when I was organizing for the museum council, sending it out whenever we had a new member. It has a lot of good background on the museum. Reading the prologue that she wrote for the catalog on the *Gift of Love*—reading it, gives you an idea of the emotional connection she had to the arts.

### **#3 What were her contributions to Pacific Northwest Art?**

—Wally Baldinger wrote an article for *Arts in America* magazine. He was very, very, integral in her development as an arts patron. His article elaborates on his concept that there’s a great affinity between the art of the Orient and Northwest artists, that needs to be promoted. Virginia bought into that strongly, and Wally deserves a great deal of credit for her development in terms of intelligent patronage and understanding and appreciating the art of the Northwest.

Wally and his wife, Ellen, developed a really large, socially prominent group of supporters for the museum—the Friends of the Museum—early on. William Russell was the first president of it and he had contacts all over the West Coast—really fine contacts that brought super people onto the Friends of the Museum board. I think Virginia was probably on the early board of Governors for it. Through contacts that Wally developed throughout the state they must have run into her. They were real promoters, and when they discovered her, they tied her into the museum. Also, I think that when Virginia first came to Portland as a single mother, working as a professional journalist who eventually married Bill Haseltine—the scion of a long-term Portland family heading a prominent leather goods store (I believe)—she wanted a “venue” for her interest in the arts and that was closed to her at the Portland Art Museum. The UO museum was a perfect venue for her development interests and gave her the inspiration to build it into a position of stature. One never knows what the personal motives are for people but I know that she loved the arts, and she relied on Wally as a guide and friend. He cultivated that love as a teacher. But she had to have that passion in the first place. She had the energy—and although she didn’t have a lot of money, she had enough “egg money” to develop a really seminal collection of Northwest art for the UO museum.

### **#4 How did she influence the art world in this region?**

As a collector and a promoter and an organizer she was a real force that made organizing for the arts occur. She was a supporter of the arts. It wasn’t just in Portland and the museum here, but the arts throughout the state. We were traveling under the auspices of the Governor’s Planning Council with Gordon Gilkey, dean of Arts and Humanities at OSU, as the head. Earlier, Virginia, Jarold Kieffer, and I had established the Arts in Oregon Association and had programs on, “education and the arts”, “business and the arts”, etc., we had good speakers from all over the state and we took the meetings all over the state so that people could get together, schmooze, and talk about what they were wanting to do and what their needs were.

When John Kennedy became president, Gordon was dean of the Arts and Humanities at OSU at the time and he happened to see that Kennedy had persuaded Congress to allocate \$25,000 to any state to explore the feasibility of establishing an arts commission. Gordon jumped on it. Gordon, Jerry and I worked up a grant proposal. Jerry's secretary typed it and we forwarded it to Gordon for his signature. Virginia had been on the Arts in Oregon Association planning committee and she was also appointed by Governor Mark Hatfield to the Governor's Planning Council for the Arts and Humanities. With that \$25,000 we went around the state together, listening to what people needed, viewing their cultural resources and explaining to them what we thought an arts commission could do for them. We then rallied the largest number of people that had ever appeared at the capitol at that time in support of the arts to lobby for it. That was my job, to pull that together. It worked. We got the enabling legislation to establish the Commission, with the understanding that this time we were not to ask for any money in support of it. That was for the next biennium, and we had to rally the troops again for that. It was a wealth of good people involved. Governor Hatfield was very good at appointing people around the state to the Planning Council that could bring this off.

**#6 =How did her collection differ from those of her contemporaries? and**

**#5 Who were her advisors?**

The focus was NW artists, including Washington artists as well as Oregon artists. I should also say that Jim Haseltine, her step-son, was very instrumental in her development as a premier art patron. He was head of the Washington State Arts and undoubtedly had a profound affect on her development as an intelligent art collector. He needs great credit.

(#7 = Anecdotes/personal experiences)

**#8 What do you remember about the “art scene” of Portland and Seattle during the 1960s?**

It was an exciting time. It's easier and more exciting to develop a project and get it under way. The challenge is really exhilarating and that's what was happening during that time. I didn't really know a lot about “art”, but I evidently was a good organizer and became president of the Friends of the Museum which enabled contacts to be made throughout the state. I met some wonderful, wonderful, people, and grew in my own appreciation for the arts. Springing from that early Friends of the Museum organization was the Arts in Oregon Association centered in the UO Museum, that in turn, evolved into the Governor's Planning Council for the Arts and Humanities, and from that evolved into the Oregon Arts Commission. All of that took place during that period. It was extremely exciting. Formerly, Portland had been the hub for the arts –all the galleries were there. Thyrsa Anderson had tried to establish a gallery in Eugene but people were not willing to pay the prices. So the UO Museum was the focal point for arts activities here. In Portland, Arlene's gallery was far and away the best thing that ever happened to the state. The Portland Art Museum was certainly

extremely important as a focal point for the visual arts, but its Board was not interested in Oregon artists—they were intent on collecting European art. Arlene's gallery was a fine gallery in the Hughes Building near the Multnomah Hotel. It burned—a terrible thing. She moved what was possible over on Burnside by 28<sup>th</sup> or something like that, around 1974. It was very painful for her and “her” artists. You can't insure art. It's irreplaceable. So, there was a lot going on during that period. Portland was *the* place, of course, for the visual arts except for the museum here which is publicly supported and the only such one on the west coast between Seattle and Sacramento. All its artwork belongs to the state but there are no public funds that go into programming: exhibition, education, acquisition. It was through persuading legislators that it is public property, as part of the university campus with a collection that is owned by the state and the responsibility of that state, that a \$6.3 million bond issue was passed (to be matched by private funds) for the renovation and addition of the facility.

*Regarding the opening of the museum to the public—beyond Gertrude Bass Warner's belief that the Museum should be a research institution, closed to the public:*

I took a paper prepared by our legal counsel at the University to Gertrude Bass Warner's grandson (her son was in a nursing home and incapacitated) to put in writing what they had said verbally—to transfer the stricture she had placed on the museum-- that none of her collection could travel outside the museum and it should be closed to the general public serving only as a research institution—the paper put in writing what they had said verbally and it was signed by the grandson to release the UO from those strictures.

That change offended some of her close associates and started a “war” with President Meredith Wilson at the heart of it. When President Fleming came in, Jarold Keiffer was the sword bearer for Fleming on it. There were people around the state who had been Mrs. Warner's close friends who felt that the university was breaking the conditions of the gift. You don't want that to happen, you don't want a donor to have that in their minds. A donor gives a gift with an agreement that that agreement would never be violated.

At that time, when Virginia was “rallying the troops”, people all over the state really cared about the arts. It was a question of rallying and coalescing that passion into organizations that could do something about it.

I was there when they visited Maude Kerns. I don't know why I was included. Jerry and Walter Crease wanted me to go—maybe as a female presence. She was suffering from shingles and was desperately sick. In an upstairs bedroom like Jerry said. It was kind of a perverse pleasure that she took from saying, “here's this and this and you're not getting it.”

***Other comments on Virginia:***

She was a wonderful dresser. She took great pride in her appearance. She was a lovely lady.

She was awarded the Governor's Award for the Arts one year. It was in the capital rotunda. Nice speeches were made by Gordon Gilkey and Governor Atiyeh (?) She was a good friend. She had a nice common touch, she was not an elitist, she related well to people. When Bill became ill they had to move to Portland from Surf Pines in Gearhart, that was their retirement home. It was beautifully decorated, filled with art treasures.  
She made a lot of friends.

***Regarding Virginia's interest in mysticism:***

"I didn't understand it. She went down to one of the institutes at Big Sur –Eselan I think—A retreat, for people into self-discovery. Her enchantment with Morris Graves came out of the fact that he has this kind of mystical quality –and that was a great part of her personality too. Tobey, Graves, Callahan and Anderson –those are the four biggies. The mystics. Those are the ones recognized as *the* top of NW art. I was too practical to understand this interest of hers. I listened to her of course but at the time I was raising kids and doing stuff you know so....

Tape runs out at this point.

From notes:

#9 What do you consider to be Virginia's legacy?

The enhanced awareness and appreciation for the artists of Oregon. She was a powerful force in developing that. And her interest in the University of Oregon Museum of Art.

"It's people like her that have made a difference. She was a force."

**INTERVIEW WITH LARRY FONG**  
**APRIL 3, 2002**  
**UNIVERSITY OF OREGON MUSEUM OF ART**  
**EUGENE, OREGON**

*Pre- interview comments:*

Arlene (Schnitzer) and Virginia were different spectrums and of almost different times of their advocacy for regional art or artists of Oregon. They both had influence but not much of a tie between the two. And certainly when you begin to assess what might be considered the Arlene Schnitzer Collection and the Virginia Haseltine Collection you will find that art history will prove that Arlene's collection will be a lot more selective and a lot more focused. But that comes from experience. Jack and Barbara McLarty were gallerist in Portland as well. They're always seen, in terms of what was considered the art scene of Portland in the 60s, as somewhat of the fringe not of the mainstream and when you begin to look at the artists that Virginia supported through acquisitions, they were also on the fringe and not in the mainstream. Could have been architects, designers, but were regional and of interest to Virginia. *[Regarding exclusivity of Portland art scene of the 60s:]* Communities in Oregon, even to this day, are considered rather provincial –including Eugene.

**In what capacity did you know Virginia Haseltine?**

I only know her through history and my own readings and research of Virginia's relationship to the UOMA because we have archival holdings of correspondence and the way the correspondence reflects her vision for assembling works of artists of her time for her collection. That's how I know her.

**What, in your opinion, were her motivations for collecting art?**

Her motivations were not dissimilar to women who had the opportunity to contribute to cultural institutions in some form or manner. Not unlike our founding director, Gertrude Bass Warner, who comes to a vision where a collection of Asian art would be of benefit to the University, certainly to the students in the interrelationship through their study of culture through visual arts. Virginia comes to that same point in her life where there is a void for her. There was some activities that attracted other members of her family to this University and the Director of this art museum at that time, Wallace Baldinger, had an interest in contemporary art of this region. A lot of it was just serendipitous that this was a time where the idea she had for regional art had not been fully conceived of by anyone in the region –perhaps contiguous with Richard Fuller of the Seattle Art Museum-- but not in any focused way that the assemblage of regional artists would reflect the history of visual arts here in Oregon. She saw in correspondence the idea immediately embraced by people in Seattle and immediately embraced by people in Portland. These people certainly had a lot more means, in terms of money, than Virginia had. So, even though she shared in the shaping of this void for museums to support and represent the art of this time and this place, she still was to be outbid as she was pursuing, at least initially, what had been

identified as the important artists of the time: works by Kenneth Callahan, Guy Anderson, Morris Graves and Mark Tobey. Her husband was a huge supporter of the athletic department. So, at this time and at this art museum, it was fairly common for the spouse of someone very much engaged in the support of another department like the athletic department, that these spouses, for the most part women, to be engaged with the art museum. In history you can see where women like Isabelle Stuart Gardner in Boston and Peggy Guggenheim in New York that there was a place in time where, if you had means and if you had a vision, and if you could find a partner like an art museum to help fulfill an idea like collecting, –they could be quite successful but often the fact that these women were the ones to advance this notion certainly had been established by then –by Virginia’s time. [Art collecting] was male dominated in terms of the *history* of patronage and there has been recent literature on what they call the “matronage” of the arts. In some ways, the women, and certainly Virginia is a good example of this, (and two generations prior to her we had Gertrude Bass Warner) her contemporary’s (male)\_\_\_\_\_ collections were very well known for the fine arts –paintings in particular, and particular ceramic forms which are known as, and I don’t like to use the term, but known as highly esthetic or high art mediums. Women tend to look at textiles, they tend to look at craft, they tend to look at what was dominated by men and considered the more functional craft aspects of art or art and culture, or creative innovation. What Virginia was very successful at in Bass’ tradition, is her personal appreciation and ability to collect a wonderful regional representation of ceramics.

[*Craft or collectible art?*] Even to the American Craft period which today is highly collectible, you see these examples of Weller and Briggles (sp?) and some of the Europeans ceramists coming to this country, or British coming to this country, Bernard Leach, Nockler, you see these in large museums with collections related to design but because of the *function* they were considered either decorative art or craft art. Even today when we have a national gallery called the Renwick, if you talk to the curators, they would feel marginalized because of the nature of their collections considered high art –the paintings. And so Virginia, and I’m not sure how she came to this, although I recall she was interested in ceramics and there were some interesting potters in Portland who were doing some highly estheticized pieces like Ken Shore, there were painters like George Hanson who were doing decorative tiles in ceramic form so there were artists known for their draftsmanship or their execution with paint medium turning to ceramics I can see where she would be intrigued by that and all of a sudden, through some sort of cross-fertilization from Great Britain and Japan in particular, ceramics became a sculptural medium not necessarily a functional medium. And there is certainly a handful of ceramists in Seattle who were doing the same. There could be an analogy to glass where it is now recognized as a sculptural form. Twenty-five years ago it was probably not considered an art medium outside the industry and integration into architecture. [was this a regional phenomena?] Harvey Middleton, Mark Hanna and the Archie Bray foundation –this was not regional but all over the country. One of the people I would look at would be Peter Voulkas --he is known for doing wonderful, functional, highly stylized,

ceramics but in the 50s it becomes very abstract and his palette becomes very experimental, his forms become very figurative and his pieces, although built with traditional execution of ceramics, are completely non-functional. And Sperry in Washington who tries to resonate these organic forms of sea life or marine life, Thies does these flat forms, that are very figurative, very elongated sculptural figurative pieces. The thought that you could only use that medium to create something other than functional takes shape during this period and Virginia sees this very readily and has put together a wonderful collection in response to that.

### **What were her contributions to Pacific NW art?**

That's a big one. For one thing, her efforts in regard to distilling what might be the only assemblage of Morris Graves materials—that one could come to one institution and begin to get into the mind and spirit of how Graves executed his paintings is a tremendous contribution. The fact that we have these \_\_\_\_\_ materials: sketches, notations that range from his various sojourns into Ireland or to the missions of New York, to Puerto Rico, his efforts to immerse himself into Asian philosophy and religions, is probably something she should be given greater recognition for. The fact that from this entire collection that she was able to work with in conjunction with Doctor Baldinger and Rolph Klep in bringing to this art museum and it was not without complexities, not without disappointment, not without frustrations, not without some rejection of what I consider a magnanimous gesture that someone might make. I think in time people will recognize how significant an effort that was, no matter how today or yesterday people reflect on her approach to this. And how it came to this art museum. Certainly Graves' need of funds was continual. It was another serendipitous circumstance where he needed money for new construction of a house and she happened to offer a proposition that he couldn't avoid or ignore.

Graves was prolific. Of the pieces of paper that we know have markings by Graves—to the extent that they were finished paintings, actually signed, dated, and titled, by Graves-- maybe a hundred of those markings could be considered completed works. What's equally or often more important are the sketches, the preparatory work or the artist's experimentations, the gestures --that we have those lends to a fuller understanding of how he saw the world and how that was expressed in his art. So, Graves on one hand..... –and I think you should leave it at that.

### **How did she influence the art world of this region?**

Certainly the fact that the livelihood of the artists become directly supported by her collecting. The fact that the artists could have work in a major regional museum –this museum-- had a huge impact on an artist's recognition of their work being acquired by an art museum. The fact that she had successfully brought Graves' paintings to this art museum [means] other Graves paintings come to us, notably the Nancy Wilson Ross collection. I seriously doubt that that collection would have come to us without the Graves archival collection. \_\_\_\_\_ For us, terribly important in terms of how she established this museums' commitment to regional art. From the commitment we have in this collection we have a history of art exhibition programs,

what we call focus galleries, a commitment to living and regional artists. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Explorations of what we consider the first generation of artists, LaVerne Kraus, George Hanson, \_\_\_\_\_, Jan Zach, --that could not have happened without Virginia's commitment to regional artists.

**Who were her advisors? Who influenced her in her purchases of art?**

Wesley Wehr in Seattle was someone that Virginia had asked for advice in terms of some of the younger regional artists in Seattle that should be represented in her collection.

In Portland, we talked about Barbara McLarty, and I'm not quite sure, I remember talking to you earlier about galleries of the late 60s, and I'm not quite sure to what point there was a relationship. Certainly discussions with Wes and maybe Barbara would bring to light other relationships she might have had I have to believe that there were others. But I can't tell you who those might be. You can certainly see through her correspondence --she corresponded to a certain extent with every artists represented in this collection-- and I would think these artists recommended other artists. She kept a file for some of the other artists. She corresponded a lot with Guy Anderson, [and in her correspondence] she explores her interest [of mysticism] with Kenneth Callahan and Guy Anderson and Graves. This pursuit of hers was an avocation to understand some of Graves works with Jung's theories. This is the one instance where she was discussing with Graves her interest in this area.

My sense, an impulse, is that it [her interest in mysticism] was more intellectual. Not something that was actually part of her daily practice but I don't know. What I've read is that it was methodology to ascribe in trying to understand perhaps, artists like Graves or art by Tobey. This was kind of an intellectual foundation for her to pursue this understanding but not part of her daily activity. But that's a question for Sally.

**What do you consider to be Virginia Haseltine's legacy?**

I kind of answered that throughout this discussion but if I had to put it succinctly, I think it was beyond trying to find a way in which the artists who already were recognized as significant artists of this region --and that's Guy Anderson, Callahan, Graves, and Mark Tobey-- that emerging artists and less notable artists would not only, perhaps in the ideal sense, would not only benefit in terms of their career through her interest, through her activities, through her collecting, through this museum's programs utilizing these acquisitions, was that the ability for an artist be an artist and to have the support of someone like Virginia Haseltine. In so many unknown ways, in unrecognized ways, it enriches ones' community. That having artists surviving as artists, through collecting and through patronage or matronage, makes ones' community so much more diverse, rich, less conventional. In some ways artists can respond to very difficult or taboo kinds of subject matter that professionals and other people in the community cannot. And I think what I see as her legacy is the fact that she recognized that, she recognized that if artists could survive as artists through her support that was going to make for a better world for her and our society....



### **Other Questions:**

#### **Where did the term, “the four mystics” come from?**

“The mystics” was a term used by a writer for Life Magazine and so again, I think when you read those early articles about those four artists either as a preface or \_\_\_\_\_ their interest in the East Asian philosophies and religion \_\_\_\_\_ they don’t go as far as making a connection to inclusive Chinese \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ painters but that’s where I think the general notion of mysticism comes from, the fact that during that time, these four artists in particular were being introspective. They were painting with water-based mediums, and in small scale, they were not working like De Kooning and Jackson Pollack and other artists of the 50s with huge, huge, canvases and explorations of color, of abstract forms, of spontaneity, so the mysticism comes from 1) the subject matter 2) the materials they used, and 3) from their introspection. I think that’s where it starts.

#### **What about Carl Morris – a name that keeps coming up, why wasn’t he considered a mystic?**

Carl Morris – was not a mystic. We begin to look at Carl Morris’ early painting –this is generalizing-- that these painters figuratively known as “The Mystics” are more influenced by the Japanese wood blocks, the Chinese calligraphy. Carl Morris’ work in the 50s is more aligned with European precisionism, looking at industrial machinery kinds of influences on painting during the 30s and 40s. You can see Morris’ paintings are about machines, linear kinds of expression of the landscape and they are oil based paintings. Tobey, Graves, Callahan, and Anderson, used water-based mediums.

Museums who were developing major collections of American art were collecting the four mystics but also collecting Carl Morris. But in terms of, is he considered a mystic, no, not at all.

#### **What would this museum be without Virginia?.**

We certainly wouldn’t have Morris Graves Collection, the way we think of the criteria for continuing to look at regional art perhaps would not have been pursued, again the influence of Asian aesthetic rather than European influence....

**INTERVIEW WITH JERRY KIEFFER, MARCH 17, 2002**  
**[PHONE CALL TO HIS HOME IN VIRGINIA]**  
**with additions from e-mail of April 6, 2002**

I came to the University of Oregon in 1963, to serve as executive officer to President Arthur Flemming. By an arrangement with the President, I also taught public administration courses regularly in the Political Science Department and twice served as its acting chairman. In 1967, I was chosen by the Dean of the then new Lila Acheson Wallace School of Community Service and Public Affairs, to organize one of the school's two divisions—the Public Policy and Administration Program. At that point, I left the Political Science Department, but both President Flemming and acting President Charles Johnson asked me to keep several presidential assistant roles, including the ones relating to the Museum of Art explained below.

I came to the UO after serving as the first elected Secretary and later also the appointed Executive Director of the congressionally authorized project to create a national center for the performing arts in the Nation's Capital. I was responsible for all aspects of planning for the proposed center. In January 1964, after the death of President Kennedy, the then almost five year-old project became the national memorial to him--the Kennedy Center—which opened in 1971.

I carried my interest in the performing arts to Oregon. I helped draft the bylaws for the Eugene Symphony, and soon joined the board of directors of the Lane County Auditorium Association. The Association's very successful summer musicals, directed by Ed Raggazino, raised money that helped finance the planning that led to the Hult Center for the Performing Arts.

**#1 – In what capacity did you know Virginia Haseltine?**

When I took my position in the president's office, President Flemming asked me to become the U of O's governor on the Board of Governors of the Friends of the Museum of Art and to maintain administrative oversight of the Museum on his behalf. In that capacity, I replaced William Jones, the UO Dean of Administration. Soon, I met and worked on the Museum's needs with Hope Pressman and Virginia Haseltine.

In 1964, I learned from my White House contacts that President Johnson's staff was working with the Congress to give the states a role in promoting the arts and humanities. Funds would be allocated to the states to finance creation of commissions on the arts that would make grants to community arts groups to strengthen their activities. At my urging, Hope, Gordon Gilkey (Oregon State), and I met with Governor Mark Hatfield and recommended that he form an exploratory council to prepare Oregon to carry out its role if the federal legislation were enacted. To this end, the governor created the Governor's Planning Council on the Arts and Humanities. Gilkey was council chairman. I was vice chairman, and Hope was

secretary. Virginia was a member of the council. We held hearings all around the state to gather opinions and ideas on how the funds that might be allocated to Oregon should be used by an Oregon Arts Commission.

When Congress, in 1965, created two endowments—the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, both with funds to allocate to the states, we created a statewide organization called Arts in Oregon, to help mobilize interest in promoting the arts at the community level. We went into most parts of the state and got a fine reaction. Virginia was very active in organizing the meetings we held in Oregon's northwest coast area.

After the hearings and community visits, I drafted a bill to authorize a state arts commission and spell out its functions. The Oregon Attorney General, whose wife served on the council with us, helped me put the draft bill in the proper form for consideration by the legislature. We then had further meetings around Oregon to see whether the draft bill was acceptable and would be supported. It was so strongly supported that when it came up in the legislature for action, the crowd at the hearing on the bill was the largest ever gathered relative to a pending bill. The bill, which created the Oregon Arts Commission, was adopted by the legislature and signed by the governor.

## **# 2 Virginia Haseltine's Objectives**

Virginia focused mainly on the Morris Grave's collection. She wanted to add to it; she wanted the Museum of Art to be its home, and she wanted the Friends of the Museum and the University to find funds to expand it. She had a lot of spark and energy. She sorted people out as good or bad according to their interest in her objectives. She could be steely at times and then could be seemingly helpless when things weren't going her way. Although I judged her to be like a dragon lady, she was a good soul. She had a kind heart. She also had an interest in cultural restoration and worked hard on the project to commemorate in Astoria, Oregon, where the Lewis and Clark expedition reached the Pacific Ocean. She was never a publicity hound. We made sure that she was mentioned in articles and publications, but she never actively sought the spotlight for herself.

## **#3 –What, in your opinion, was Virginia's motivations for collecting art?**

"I don't know of any particular starting point. She just seemed to have these interests, with an emphasis on the works of Morris Graves. Frankly, I didn't particularly like the Morris Graves works that I saw. Most of them were dark and mysterious to me. Hope Pressman tried to interpret Graves to me as best she could and was very patient in explaining to me what Virginia saw in his works. I chose not to share my views on Graves with Virginia, because I didn't want her to classify me as a heathen.

**#3 –What were Virginia’s contributions to Pacific Northwest art? And--  
 #4 –How did she influence the art world of this region?**

She helped greatly in creating an interest in Pacific Northwest art. In doing this, she was a lay person, not an artist. To us in Eugene, Pacific Northwest art sort of grew off the original purpose and focus of the University of Oregon Museum of Art, which was oriental art. Gertrude Bass Warner’s oriental art collection, most of which was taken out of China after the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, was presented to the University as a package deal. She would supply the art works; the University had to supply the building. In accepting her proposal, a Deed of Gift was drawn up that bound the State of Oregon in a very interesting way. It specified that the Museum was created *only* for teachers and students of oriental art--*not for the public*. The collection was very protected. Guard dogs were used to patrol the halls at night.

After some years, the Friends of the Museum began asking, “Why aren’t the Museum’s collections open to the public?” A young, law school professor, Hans Linde, thought that the state went beyond its legal authority in entering into the very restrictive Deed of Gift arrangement with the Warner family. He prepared and presented to the Oregon attorney general a draft attorney general’s opinion that challenged the legality of the state’s action that excluded the general public from enjoying the assets of a state facility. The attorney general concurred with Linde and issued an opinion that the Deed of Gift was unconstitutional. This ruling, which broke the Deed of Gift, touched off a kind of cultural war in the Eugene community between those who supported the legal opinion and those who saw it as evil and a breach of promise with the Warner family.

Among those opposed to the ruling was Maude Kerns and her following, who felt that the state was honor-bound to maintain the conditions of the gift as originally agreed to with Mrs. Warner. People weren’t speaking to each other over this, and the University was caught in middle, because the Museum was on its campus, and it had budget control over its operations. Bill Jones, the UO Vice President for Administration, became the object of attack by the Maude Kerns group, because the museum was under his supervision.

This all took place before I came to Oregon in the fall of 1963. President Flemming felt badly that the Museum was an irritant in the U of O ‘s community relations. However, he strongly agreed that the public should be able to enjoy its collections. When I came to the campus, he had the idea that perhaps a new face, unrelated to the troubled history involved, could help ease the tensions. So, he asked me to take over administrative supervision of the Museum. Bill Jones was delighted to give up that job.

In late 1963, I got a call from Maude Kern’s niece, a Miss (Leslie) Broeckelbank. She said: “Maude wants to see you, and come soon. She is quite ill!” I thought that it

might be prudent to have a witness to whatever was discussed during the visit. So, I invited Walter Creese, the Dean of Architecture and Allied Arts to join me. I did this, because both of us were new to the campus and uninvolved in the Deed of Gift controversy.

The meeting was probably was one of the strangest encounters I ever had. We were taken to Maude Kerns' bedroom. Bedridden, she was completely wrapped from head to toe in what looked like a white shroud. Only her face was visible. After we were introduced, she immediately asked her niece to get something in another room. The niece came back with a case that was about 2 inches thick and about a yard square. Miss Kerns told her to open the case to our inspection. Walter and I were amazed. It was jammed with fine jade pieces. I suspect that they were a part of the Warner collection of art objects taken out of China. Mrs. Kerns then said: "You see what's in that case? Well your Museum is *not* going to get anything in it!" Then, she snapped her fingers again. The niece closed the case and removed it from the room. Then, Miss Kerns launched into a long and bitter attack on Bill Jones.

Dean Creese and I listened with embarrassment. Finally, I rose and said: "Miss Kerns, Walter and I are new to the University and have had no part in all this controversy. We can't undo the actions that you are criticizing. You asked me to come over for some purpose, and I hope our getting acquainted is not limited to hearing your criticism of Dean Jones. Is there something else I can do for you?"

Mrs. Kerns shouted: "Sit down! I want to talk to you about my estate. Quite puzzled, I couldn't imagine what advice or help I could give her on that subject, and, given the bad history she had just recited, it seemed highly unlikely that she was going to bequeath anything to the U of O.

Then, she said that she didn't have much time left, but she wanted to make a gift to the University. I asked her about the purpose of the gift. She said that the answer to that depended upon what happened to a piece of land she owned on the shore of Willamette River near by. She didn't know how much the land was worth because its value would be impacted by where the state located a bridge across the river. If the bridge structure or ramps were actually built on her land, the state would only have to pay her an amount considered fair in a condemnation proceeding. However, if the land wasn't needed to build the bridge or its ramps, it was large enough to be home to a shopping center near to where the bridge came ashore. The value in that case would be much higher. In either case, she wanted the proceeds from sale of the land to be given to the U of O. Her hope was that the proceeds would be ample enough to finance a series of lectures by the world's leading oriental art experts who would be invited to come to the campus.

After listening to her idea, I asked whether she was open to an alternative that would do a better job of realizing her objectives. She asked me to explain. I noted that visiting lecturers come to the campus, give their talks, perhaps attend a meeting or

two with faculty and students, and depart. They leave very little of an ongoing nature to stimulate further scholarship, foster the growth of graduate studies, and produce books and articles on oriental art. I suggested that an effective way to achieve these outcomes would be to endow a professorship of oriental art. Such a professor would be on the campus all the time, teaching, publishing studies, guiding advance degree candidates, stimulating scholarship, attracting grants, and collaborating with other scholars of oriental art.

Miss Kerns liked this alternative very much. She pressed me to reduce my plan to writing and get it to her as soon as possible so that she could act on it while she could. I prepared a draft at once and cleared it with President Flemming. He indicated that I also could tell Mrs. Kerns that the U of O would augment her funds to assure that the annual earnings from the endowment would meet the costs of the professorship. In that way she could be assured that it would continue indefinitely. I quickly added this feature to the plan and had a messenger take the envelope to Maude Kerns' home.

Less than two weeks later she died, and I assumed that the professorship idea died with her. Time would have been needed for her lawyers to study the U of O proposal. Then, if they found it acceptable, more time would have been required to prepare and get the necessary implementing papers, including a modification of her will, back to her for her signature. With so little time between my sending our proposal to her and her death, I judged that there couldn't have been enough time to do all that had to be done. So, I figured the endowed professorship matter to be moot and forgot about it.

However, a year or so later, in my role as executive officer to the president, I was going over a report from the university business office on funds donated to the university. My eye fell on a gift called "*Maude Kerns Professorship*." What was this? I was never told about such a bequest. I asked our business manager, Orville Lindstrom, for details, and he said that Mrs. Kerns' will provided that funds realized from the sale or state condemnation of her land would be used to help finance an endowed professorship of oriental art. It all was a total surprise to me.

Then, I got another surprise. When I asked Lindstrom for the amount of the bequest, he didn't know because the estate was not yet closed. It turned out that Miss Kerns' assets included some common stocks. As the university was barred by law from buying or selling stocks, the executors of her will had to sell them and deposit the proceeds in the pool of funds that accrued from cashing out her assets. Then, the estate could be closed, and the funds bequeathed to the U of O could be transferred to its control.

Lindstrom told me that he was puzzled as to why in over a year the estate executors hadn't sold the stocks. At my request, he called them to see whether some problem was holding them back. There was none. Apparently, they had simply forgotten to sell the stocks. They quickly agreed to do so. Lindstrom later reported that about

\$500,000 came to the U of O from the Kerns' bequest.

That wasn't the end of it. Even though the U of O was now free to use the funds from the Kerns' oriental arts professorship, apparently it took several years to recruit a professor. By the time that was done, I was no longer on the campus, and at this time I know very little of how it all worked out. The long and short of it was that in an unwitting way I may have helped ease a little the longstanding tension between the Maude Kerns following and the U of O. Anyway, the Museum continued to evolve with a scope beyond its original oriental art focus, with much attention to Pacific Northwest art.

### **#5 Who were Virginia Haseltine's advisors? What influenced her in her art purchases?**

Dr. Wallace Baldinger was the director of the Museum of Art. He traveled extensively in Asia. The Friends had an acquisitions committee, and some of its members told me that Baldinger bypassed them and their judgments when he arbitrarily bought things while he was traveling. Looking into their complaints, I found that he sometimes had authorization for these purchases but often he did not. Packages would show up on the Museum doorstep, and the friends were supposed to ratify and pay for his purchases. Finally, I told Baldinger that he had no authority to buy art works on his own without the approval of the Friends' acquisitions committee. I warned him that when he traveled again and bought things without authorization, his purchases, when they arrived at the Museum were to be labeled with his name, and he was to pay for their cost and shipping charges. He was very unhappy, but that policy stuck as long as I was around.

This whole episode led me to explore a larger question with my fellow governors. I asked: Why are we limiting our scope to simply showing our collections in the Museum and buying a few works of art each year? Instead, why doesn't the Museum develop a program to exhibit other collections in to the Museum and send our collections to be seen in other Oregon and Pacific Northwest communities? Such exchanges would help build goodwill for the Museum, and that may help us attract donations and/or state funds to finance the badly needed renewal and expansion of our rundown facilities. The Museum was the only museum of art in Oregon located on a campus, which made it a public facility. Instead of its activities being of value mainly in the Eugene area, its traveling arts pro-gram would give it a statewide (and beyond) image. President Flemming thought highly of this exchange idea. With his support, I presented it to the Friends of the Museum. There was some grousing, but a majority of the governors approved it. Virginia Haseltine was quite enthusiastic. She saw quickly the relationship between the idea and her desire to promote the works of Morris Graves.

On the implementation side, I got lucky. To manage the touring arts program, I hired a recent master of art graduate named Dennis Gould who was an organizational

genius. He devised both logistical and security arrangements for bringing the Museum's collections to country clubs, libraries, city halls, and other venues for exhibiting works of art. He persuaded a car dealer to donate a van to transport the exhibitions, and he fitted its inside with structures of his design that permitted paintings and other art objects to be transported in a secure way and then speedily loaded and unloaded as it moved from community to community. Dennis's work was so good that it attracted the attention of the Smithsonian Institution. It hired him to direct its national traveling exhibitions program. Later, for a number of years, he headed the Getty Museum. Today, he is retired in Noti, Oregon.

**#6 Are there any anecdotes or personal experiences you would like to share about Virginia Haseltine?**

She had a temperamental side. Sometimes the lack of funds, or bureaucratic restrictions sorely frustrated her, and she would speak about giving up her work. However, she kept going. She was a visionary, but she had a hard shell. When she was frustrated she be-came almost weepy, "*What am I going to do?*" Then we would shore her up and she would be okay. She was very much a lady. Even when exasperated, she seemed to have enough control to restrain her from blow-ups. I expect that she had them, but they were not in my seeing or hearing.

Virginia's husband, Bill, was a wonderful guy. His love was football not culture. However, he tolerated Virginia's cultural interests, and she tolerated his football interests. He went to every UO football game, at home or away, but he tried to avoid cultural events. One time, I saw him at such an event and kidded him about it. He said: "Yeah, this is my once a year cultural event."

**#7 –What do you remember about the “art scene” of Portland and Seattle during the 1960s?**

I came from long experience in Washington and New York where the arts picture was encrusted with organizations founded generations earlier by the old families. People new to the scene had a hard time being heard or accepted. Some of this same thing character-ized Portland and Seattle in the mid-sixties, but not to the degree found in New York and Washington. Things were even more open then. New ideas were given a hearing, and new people who offered constructive energy were welcome to help out.

Eugene was even more open to new ideas and people. Also, There were more gaps to be filled in the arts scene. We had very fine music programs at the U of O, but the Eugene community didn't have a symphony or a large symphony hall. I don't remember how I got involved, but as mentioned earlier, I helped with the creation of the Eugene Sym-phony by drawing up its bylaws, and I helped form the Lane County Auditorium Association and served on its board. Also, as the U of O representative



on the Eugene Chamber of Commerce, I had a chance to bring community arts needs to the attention of the community's business leaders.

I found that a number of the fine arts faculty members at the U of O were highly regarded in both Portland and Seattle. I judged, however, that they were regarded as more "experimental" to some and radical to others. Oregon has always been an interesting mixture of liberal experimentation and hard-line conservatism—in government, politics, and the arts. In other parts of the state, the U of O was seen as a breeding ground and nest for radicals. For example, while I was a bit more liberal than Wallace Baldinger, we both were fairly conservative in terms of pushing the limits on art that many people considered pornographic. For his restrictive views on that subject he wound up being hung in effigy outside the Museum.

Each year, the Museum featured the creative efforts of the masters of fine arts students. In early 1969, Wally got a preview of what was to be displayed that year. He came to me for guidance. Some of the works were excellent, he said, but others were pretty raw. He wanted me to decree that the raw stuff should be excluded from the Museum. I rejected the role of censor. So, instead, I suggested that he have a special room upstairs in the Museum with a warning sign outside or on the stairs to tell people that they may not wish their children to see some of the art in that room. They could then make their own decision. We weren't acting as censors; we were simply giving people early warning. Baldinger thought this was a good way to deal with this thorny issue, and he left.

I had to be out of town when the masters' exhibition was held. One evening, while I was away, I got an anguished call from Wally. He said that he was being hung in effigy in front of the Museum and being charged with acting like a public morals dictator. I asked him whether he followed my special room strategy. He replied that he had decided simply to ban from the Museum the works that offended him. That was the worst thing he could have done, and his and the Museum's reputations were harmed by his bad judgment in that case.

#9 –What do you consider to be Virginia Haseltine's legacy?

Virginia's willingness to be out in front in the encouragement of people to recognize Pacific Northwest art and artists certainly was a part of her legacy. I regarded her as the strongest person in that direction. She always felt the U of O could have had a bigger mark on the art world if it became an outstanding proponent of Pacific Northwest art, and she kept urging us to think more creatively in that emphasis. However, the state's funding problems repeatedly knocked the props out from under useful initiatives. I know that this pattern discouraged her a great deal.

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